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THE MAGIC OF CHINA'S
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While it wasn't the first bison we'd seen that day, it was the only one to look back like that—like he was giving us permission to stay there, in the moment.
TOM M., MAMMOTH HOT SPRINGS, GATEWAY TO YELLOWSTONE | [#MontanaMoment](#)



NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC TRAVELER

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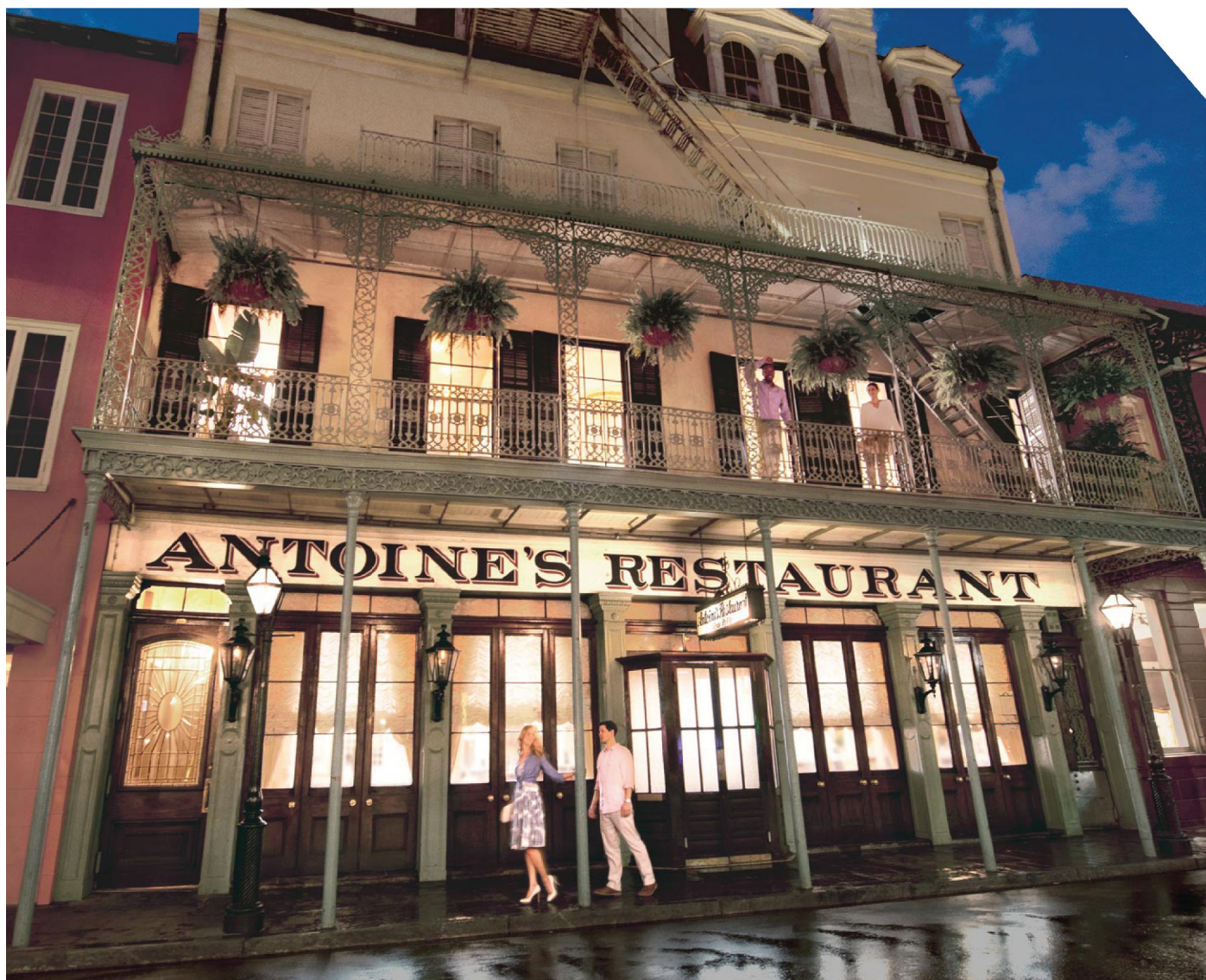
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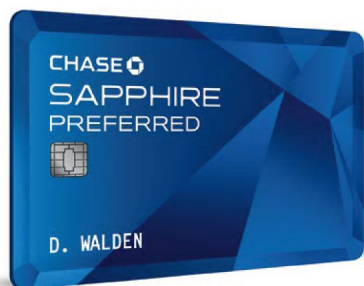
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CHASE



On the newsstand
in Shanghai

Looking at the World Differently

IT WAS MARCH 2012, and I was sitting at a café in Milan's Piazza del Duomo, an immense square that spreads like an apron from the foot of the city's cathedral, a Gothic marvel. The piazza was swarming with fans of the city's beloved soccer club, which at that moment was playing against perennial rival Barcelona. Fans streamed from bar to bar, braying for their teams and lustily singing fight songs. At another time I would have scavenged a ticket and joined the pandemonium. However, I was in Milan for the launch of *Traveler's* new Italian edition, *Touring*. When I leaf through a copy of *Touring* now, I think of my Italian meal with editorial director Silvestro Serra and some of his staff—and that Milan moment on the piazza.

Similarly, our Chinese edition reminds me of being led by our Beijing-based editors into their city, to shops where I bought woven slippers for my kids. And when I read the Editor's Note of Niloufer Venkatraman, *Traveller India's* editor in chief, I can

hear her telling stories over lunch in Delhi about hiking the Western Ghats and Nepal—places I dream of one day visiting.

Traveler publishes 14 international editions in 12 languages. I read—or look at, when there's a language barrier—them all. They are a window on the world, reflecting the personalities, interests, dream destinations, and visual expressions of their readerships.

Our foreign siblings often run our stories, and I have long wanted to run some of their best work. Finally, we're doing it. On page 34 you will find "Made in Italy," from our friends in Milan, and on page 64, "Roma Rhapsody," from our partner in the Netherlands. Our global colleagues sharpen our international insights and, through countless contributions to our thinking and reporting, help us all deliver on our motto: "Nobody Knows This World Better."

Our international editions offer a window on the world, reflecting the many interests, personalities, and dream destinations of their varied readerships.

—KEITH BELLOWS

OUR MISSION

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WE BELIEVE THE
ROAD LESS

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AT ALL.

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We woke up to a view of the Saint Petersburg skyline. From our balcony it hung like a perfectly framed painting. Walking the city streets this afternoon reminded of wandering through an art museum. Everything was an exhibit.



Our state room!

Happy to be back on the ship, soaking in the last of today's natural light as it streams through the windows of the Palm Court.



Russian tea in Saint Petersburg



THE ALL INCLUSIVE



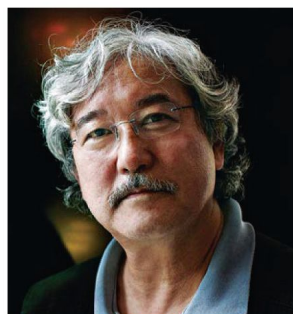
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MICHAEL YAMASHITA
PHOTOGRAPHER,
"OVER THE HORIZON"

HOME: Rural New Jersey.

ON THE FRINGE: I may have the world's largest body of work on China from 30 years of photo shoots. I'm especially drawn to the border provinces, which have the most cultural and ethnic diversity. You can go from 20,000-foot snow mountains to rain forests in a day's drive.

SECRET OF CHINA: I recently shot the Silk Road, along the Hexi Corridor. The biggest surprise was the Danxia Landforms. These "rainbow" mountains with colored striations were still undiscovered when I last passed through, in 2003. Since becoming a World Heritage site in 2010, the place has become a hot destination for Chinese photographers, yet it's virtually unknown in the West.

TOMORROWLAND: My fantasy is to photograph Afghanistan when war is over. Traveling north from Iran takes in some of the world's most dramatic scenery, which I glimpsed just before 9/11—high desert landscapes, rocky mountains, and cultures that have barely changed since Marco Polo passed through. Someday Afghanistan will be a huge tourist destination.



DAISUKE UTAGAWA
WRITER, LOCAL FLAVOR: "TOKYO'S HOT NOODLE DISH"

HOME: After bouncing around the world, I'm settled in D.C., where I'm the co-owner of a sushi bar as well as a new ramen house and *izakaya* [Japanese pub].

ON TOKYO TIME: When I travel to Tokyo, I have a routine. I usually arrive around dinner time, so I go to my favorite *izakaya*, followed by a 24-hour sauna for a good scrub: my cure for jet lag. The next morning I usually wake up at 4 a.m. and hungry—my belly is still on D.C. time—so I'll go to Tsukiji fish market.

MISO HUNGRY: I've never seen anywhere else in the world the level of obsession with food that exists in Japan. The best *tendon* [a tempura rice bowl] I've ever had was at Masaru in the Asakusa district of Tokyo. And instead of the superformal and expensive sushi spots, I prefer the seven-seat Sushi Ochiai in Ginza—classic, proper Edo-style sushi in a relaxed atmosphere.

SOUL FOOD: The more I travel and eat, the more I'm reminded that the best cooking is the kind that understands the ingredients rather than tries to make them something they aren't, in an acrobatic sort of way. The creative chefs I find most intriguing are those who never forget the soul of the food.

ISABELLA BREGA
WRITER, "MADE IN ITALY"

HOME: I love living in Milan—urban Italy at its best.

MATERIAL WORLD: I studied art history and also earned a diploma in scagliola, an ancient method of producing stucco to resemble marble using selenite, glue, and natural pigments. The art form is widespread in north and central Italian churches from the 17th and 18th centuries.

THAT'S AMORE: I own a Neapolitan crèche that is particularly special to me, made of ten figurines I found at different Naples shops. Each figure dates from the 1700s and includes antique fabrics and crystal eyes.

ITALIAN JOB: In recent years, it's been fascinating to see Italian artisans develop new forms of creativity and use technology in the design of traditional handmade objects.

MORE CRAFT PICKS: Palermo is justifiably famous for its collectible dolls and colorful horse-drawn carts, but it also has a strong artisanal tradition for jewelry. Turin is where you look for fabrics and musical instruments. All sorts of artisanship thrive in Rome, including mosaics.



KAISERN CHEN (YAMASHITA), DAISUKE UTAGAWA (UTAGAWA), GRAZIA IPPOLITO (BREGA)

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Copenhagen designer Kasper Salto in his studio

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FROM CHOCOLATE to architecture, design takes center stage in Copenhagen—and likewise appeared in a starring role in Bruce Schoenfeld’s November 2013 feature (“Danish Modern”). “I found it particularly interesting that Danes tend to wait for a design challenge to present itself, and then they figure out an elegant solution,” wrote Erik Illi of **Kalispell, Mont.** “I also like their notion of environmental friendliness, *miljøvenlig*—that it’s most sustainable to make something useful. This is quite a contrast to many American industries that introduce a continuous stream of new products while seeming to ignore previous designs. If more people traveled to see what other societies are doing well, perhaps we could improve things back home.”

DO-GOODERS Our second annual “Travelers of the Year” feature (November 2013) got the attention of many readers, and thousands voted in our online People’s Choice contest.

“Thank goodness for people like Katherine Connor, who opened her heart to such beautiful creatures,” wrote Elizabeth Balbin of **Coconut Grove, Fla.**, about the crowd favorite, who founded Boon Lott’s Elephant Sanctuary in northern Thailand after a nose-to-trunk encounter with a baby Asian elephant. “One small action can have a ripple effect.”

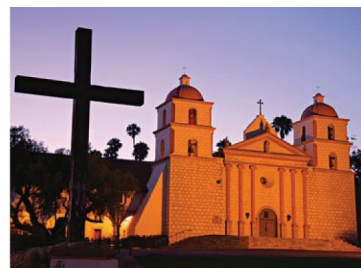
Meanwhile, 2012’s honorees continue to make waves. In a post on our Intelligent Travel blog (“The Truth About Doing Good”), world-traveling mom Heather Greenwood Davis explored the conundrum posed by voluntourism. Her conclusions about the power of cross-cultural interactions resonated with readers. “Offering gifts is a kind gesture but alone will not have lasting effects,” wrote Maree Teolanafo of **Newcastle, Australia.** “Gifts of knowledge and support are priceless. We cannot ‘save the world,’ but touching someone’s life is a tangible achievement.” Tracey Friley, a featured traveler in the 2013 lineup, chimed in from **Paris**

“Visiting only the beautiful sights of a destination is like eating candy all day long. Soon you want something more savory, even spicy.”

—LAUREL KALLENBACH ON LOWBROW TRAVEL (ONLINE)

to share her experience taking a group of girls to an orphanage in Belize: “The girls each raised \$100 to donate once they arrived. You could see the girls were proud to give and the orphanage was grateful to receive the funds—but the real highlight was watching the children play together.”

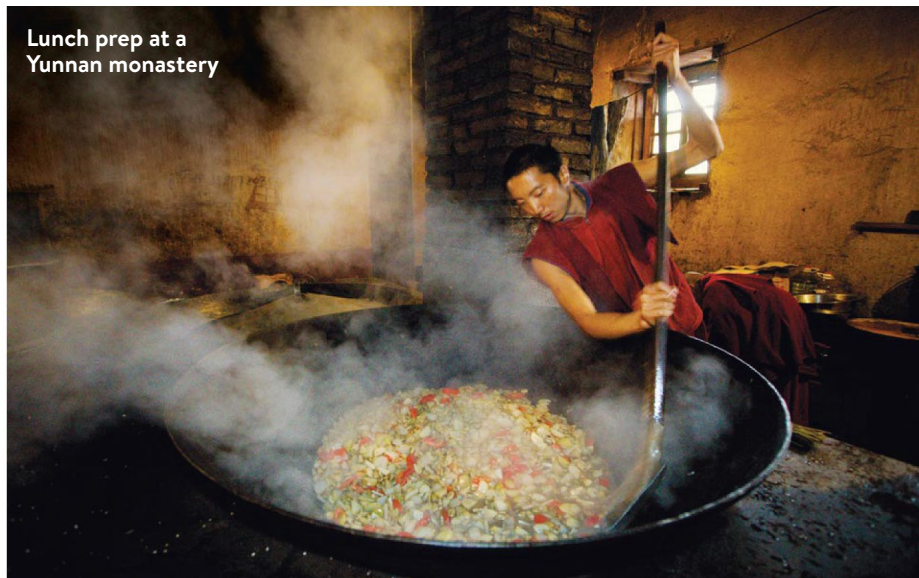
A HIGH BAR “Ask a Canadian about his favorite dessert and ‘Nanaimo bar’ is the likely reply,” began an August/September 2013 Local Flavor article about this no-bake, three-layered Vancouver Island delicacy. Firda Beka of **Stratford, Canada**, offered a confectionery caveat: “Pretty sure butter tarts would win if there was a real survey.”



SIN OF OMISSION

“Santa Barbara’s Star Power” by Pico Iyer (November 2013) inspired former resident Fred Aquilina of **Vacaville, Calif.**, to pipe up: “A visit without a tour of the city’s historic mission [above] misses an opportunity to delve into the life of early California.”

Lunch prep at a Yunnan monastery



READ IT, DO IT

On China's Forgotten Road

On page 46, Scott Wallace searches for traces of his wayward grandfather in China's Yunnan Province. National Geographic Adventures follows the ancient trade route that crisscrosses these borderlands in "China: The Tea Horse Road and Shangri-La." On this active journey, travelers track endangered golden monkeys, glimpse rituals at the 17th-century Dongzhulin Monastery, and hike through mushroom meadows. Photographer Michael Yamashita will guide a special trip for shutterbugs April 7–17.

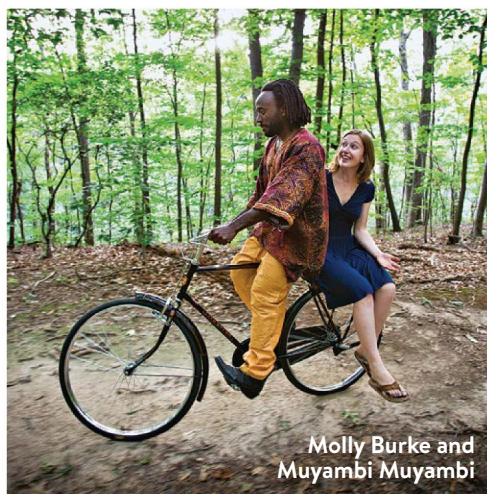
■ NATIONALGEOGRAPHICADVENTURES.COM/CHINA

SAVE THE DATE

A MEETING OF LIKE MINDS AND FULL PASSPORTS

The November 2013 issue featured "Travelers of the Year," our second annual showcase of ordinary people on extraordinary missions, including a caregiver bringing medicine to the Himalaya, two friends (right) micro-financing bikes in rural Uganda, and a blogger helping girls get passports. On February 6, five of those travelers will convene at National Geographic headquarters in Washington, D.C., for an evening of discussion with Editor at Large George Stone.

■ NATIONALGEOGRAPHIC.COM/EVENTS



Molly Burke and Muyambi Muyambi

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PEAK EXPERIENCES

WITH TIM MEDVETZ,
HOST OF NAT GEO WILD'S
"GOING WILD"

AND KRIS HARTMAN
AT MT. ST. HELEN'S NATIONAL PARK



WHEN TIM MEDVETZ SHATTERED HIS BODY AND CRACKED HIS SKULL IN A NEAR-FATAL MOTORCYCLE ACCIDENT IN 2001, HE WAS NOT EXPECTED TO WALK AGAIN. A YEAR LATER, HE WAS CLIMBING MT. EVEREST.

NOW, ON "GOING WILD," TIM IS TAKING EVERYDAY AMERICANS ON A RIGOROUS JOURNEY, TRANSPORTING THEM TO PLACES OTHERS CAN ONLY DREAM OF REACHING WHERE THEY CAN EXPLORE THE WONDERS OF THE WORLD—AND REDISCOVER THEMSELVES. IN THIS EPISODE, WE MEET KRIS HARTMAN, WHO'S BEEN DEALING WITH THE DEATH OF HIS SISTER SEVEN YEARS AGO BY IMMERSING HIMSELF IN HIS JOB AND NIGHTLY TV-WATCHING BINGES. HIS WIFE WORRIES THAT'S HE'S MISSING OUT ON HIS SON'S CHILDHOOD.

"HE NEEDS A WAKE-UP CALL

—a little dose of Mother Nature," says Tim. Together, they'll take a treacherous three-day journey up the summit of Mt. St. Helen's, an 8,300-foot active volcano in Washington State. Its snowy peaks and dense forests are teeming with dangerous wildlife, including cougars, elk, and bears. Tim knows this deadly environment is just the place to kick Kris into gear.

"I'm going to put you through hell," Tim tells him—and does. Will Kris reach the peak—and muster the courage to dig deep within and find the strength to LIVE LIFE TO THE FULLEST?



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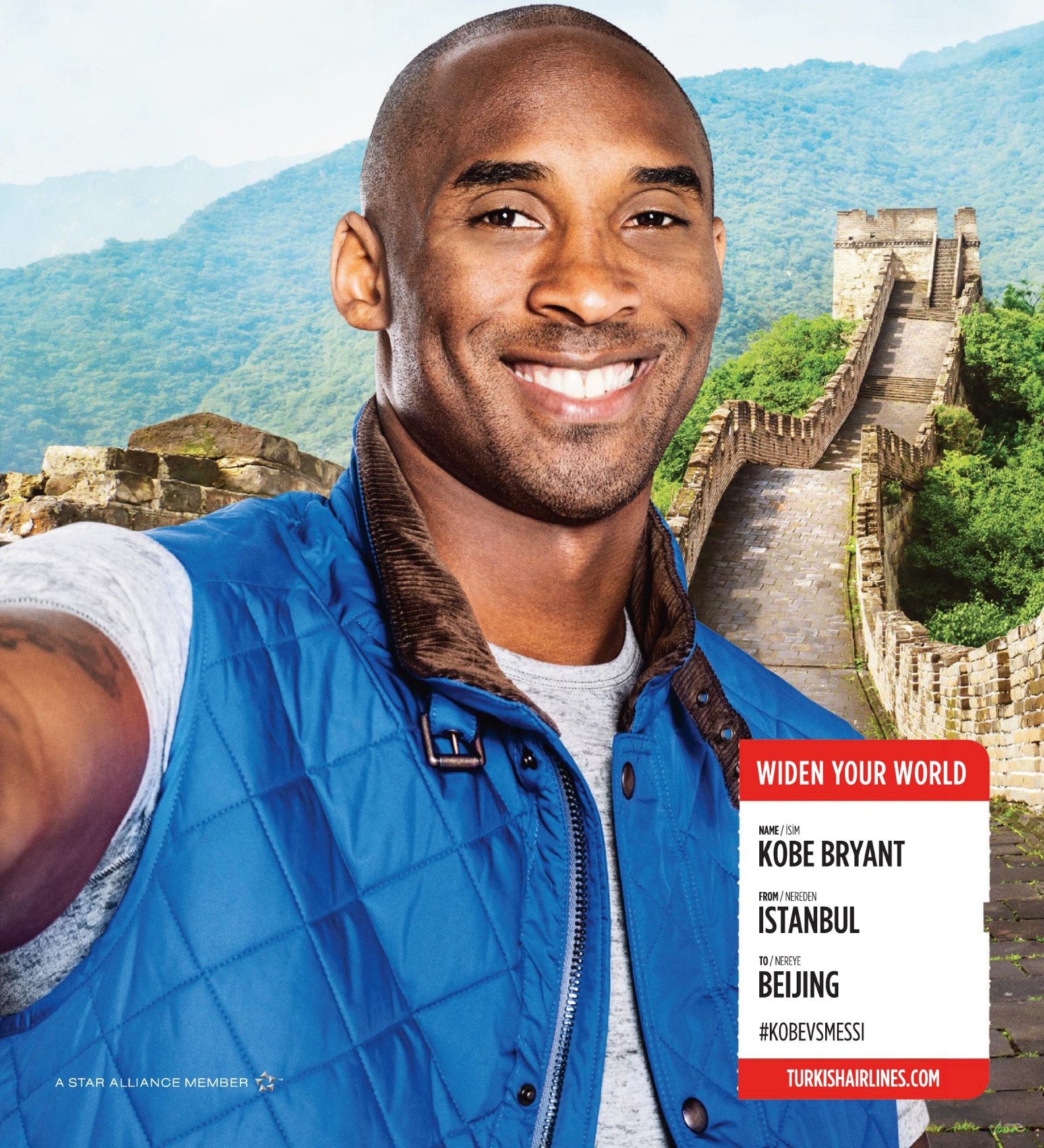


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—EXPLORER JOHANN MENGE

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Panama City 20

Kingsford Homestead
in South Australia's
Barossa Valley,

PAGE 14



Krondorf vineyard vistas at the Grant Burge tasting room in the Barossa Valley

The New Wine Wizards of Oz

BAROSSA VALLEY, AUSTRALIA | Like a fine wine, this valley an hour north of Adelaide is aged perfection. Wineries here are housed in sandstone cottages built circa 1860, and multigenerational families still use Old World techniques and fruit from century-old vines planted in the shadow of ancient gum trees. Visitors follow rows of gnarled grapevines to find more than 150 wineries and 80 tasting rooms—called cellar doors—from some of the country’s most vaunted Shiraz names. But lately, the younger generation has set a new course that’s equal parts heritage and renewal. “We’re about more than traditional Shiraz,” says Kirsty Radford, part of a family of fifth-generation winemakers. “We’re trying different fermentation and

growing methods and producing varietals not usually done here.” Tap into the revitalization at the Artisans of Barossa, a bluestone-meets-glass-and-steel co-op where seven experimental winemakers pour such small-batch surprises as Grenache and Roussanne. Away from the vine, 28-year-old native chef Lachlan Colwill celebrates the region’s bounty with dishes like foraged mushrooms sprinkled with tarragon at Hentley Farms Restaurant. And the Kingsford Homestead, a seven-suite hotel in a meticulously restored 1856 homestead, draws bush baths under a canopy of gum trees and serves dinner in a stone-walled wine cellar. —**ELIZABETH WOODSON**

■ **TIP: TRY THE BAROSSA’S OTHER TOP PRODUCT, FORTIFIED WINE.**

ATLAS



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An interactive map at downtown Tulsa's Woody Guthrie Center



This Town Was Made for Music Lovers

TULSA, OKLAHOMA | An alternative streak fuels this oil town. A mural on downtown's new Woody Guthrie Center shows the Oklahoman songwriter holding a guitar tagged "This machine kills fascists"—words he scrawled on his instrument in 1943 but not the ones his name usually conjures. "'This Land Is Your Land' isn't just a campfire song; Guthrie really was a radical," says Deana McCloud, executive director of the museum. Tulsa likewise is often misunderstood. With an art deco skyline of gargoyles and spires, the city has long been rich in the arts, from Cain's Ballroom—displaying paraphernalia from famous headliners including Bob Wills, the Sex Pistols, and Wilco—to a glassblowing school and the 19,000-seat BOK Center.

Additions such as the Woody Guthrie Center and a downtown branch of the Philbrook contemporary art museum have reinvigorated the historic Brady Arts District. The 19-story Mayo Hotel, a 1925 landmark with Doric columns, seemed fated for demolition a few years ago; now renovated, it attracts post-arena-concert crowds to its rooftop bar (part of a suite where Elvis Presley once stayed). And on any given night at SoundPony, whether punk or electronic, the music is always free and original. "We were weird before Austin," says sculptor Colleen Stiles. "We just kept it to ourselves." —**STEVE LARESE**

■ **TIP: EXPLORE THE BRADY ARTS DISTRICT THE FIRST FRIDAY OF THE MONTH FOR FREE MUSEUM ADMISSION, MUSIC, AND ART SHOWS.**

ATLAS



Rocker Sid Vicious put his fist through the wall at Cain's Ballroom during a 1978 Sex Pistols concert. The hole remains, framed for public admiration.

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West Bay Beach in southern England

Britain's Ultimate Cliff-Hanger

DORSET, ENGLAND | If these cliffs in West Bay Beach look familiar, it's because they brood over the key crime scene in the transatlantic TV hit *Broadchurch*. Rising as if ripped from Earth's crust, the formation has always seemed positioned for dramatic effect. In fact, show creator Chris Chibnall calls the murder mystery a love letter to his home in West Dorset. Beyond the bluffs lie all the trappings of a classic British seaside town: thatched cottages, shops brimming with buckets and spades, strawberry jam on scones, and generous lashings of clotted cream—all served up in one of England's most family-friendly settings. Still, like the shadowy characters of *Broadchurch*, Dorset thrives on secrets. Ocher red

sediment, gravel-encased fossils, and preserved dinosaur footprints contribute to the 200 million years of semi-buried history that earned this 95-mile shoreline its status as a World Heritage site and its nickname of Jurassic Coast. With luck, a guide, and occasionally a geological hammer, hikers can uncover fossils amid the craggy coves, sandy beaches, and blustery walkways while puffins lurch overhead and dolphins slice through choppy waves. Although experts unearth fossils around the West Bay cliffs, beginners can maximize their luck a few miles west in Lyme Regis, aka the Pearl of Dorset. —**ABIGAIL KING**

■ **TIP: STAY AT THE BULL HOTEL, WHERE SOME ROOMS HAVE FOUR-POSTER BEDS OR ROLL-TOP TUBS, IN A RENOVATED COACHING INN.**

ATLAS



In the 1040s, Benedictine monks raised swans for banquet food at Dorset's Abbotsbury Swannery, where a colony of mute swans nests today.

GIDEON MENDEL/CORBIS; INTERNATIONAL MAPPING



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Panama City's waterfront causeway has views of downtown.

Panama at Another Crossroads

PANAMA CITY | After a decade of stop-and-go development, the Frank Gehry-designed BioMuseo opens February 3. The debut marks a defining moment for the capital in the centennial of another game changer: the Panama Canal. Actually, the museum's protracted birth fits the subject matter of its galleries, which tell a story that began some 20 million years ago. Tectonic plates clashed and underwater volcanoes roiled to form the land bridge between continents today known as the nation of Panama, reshaping global climate and propelling massive biodiversity. Now, as Panama City transforms into a vibrant boomtown, Gehry's riot of Play-Doh colors, convoluted shapes, and helter-skelter arrangements makes a new anchor for

the evolving skyline. Sensory overload continues inside the BioMuseo. In the Panamarama gallery, wall projections of native ecosystems such as tropical cloud and rain forests envelop visitors with the point of view of sea turtles, leafcutter ants, and other indigenous creatures. Elsewhere, lopsided columns tower over gallerygoers to represent the igneous rock that thrust up from the depths of the sea to forge the country. "Panama has always been more than the canal," says spokesman Jorge Sanchez. "Now you can experience its history, people, biodiversity, and culture—within a work of art." —**JEANINE BARONE**

■ **TIP: EXPLORE THE RESURGENT COLONIAL NEIGHBORHOOD OF CASCO VIEJO, A UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE.**

ATLAS



While setting the museum's foundation, BioMuseo workers unearthed a buried locomotive that was used to help build the Panama Canal.

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One of the first woman photographers to work for National Geographic, **Annie Griffiths** has photographed in 150 countries during her illustrious career. She has worked on dozens of magazine and book projects for the Society, including stories on Lawrence of Arabia, Baja California, Galilee, Petra, Sydney, New Zealand, and Jerusalem.



As Director of Photography for *National Geographic Traveler*, **Dan Westergren** is responsible for the magazine's photographic vision. While under his watchful eye, the magazine has won numerous awards for photography. Besides photo editing, Dan is an accomplished photographer and an experienced teacher, having led workshops for National Geographic all over the world.

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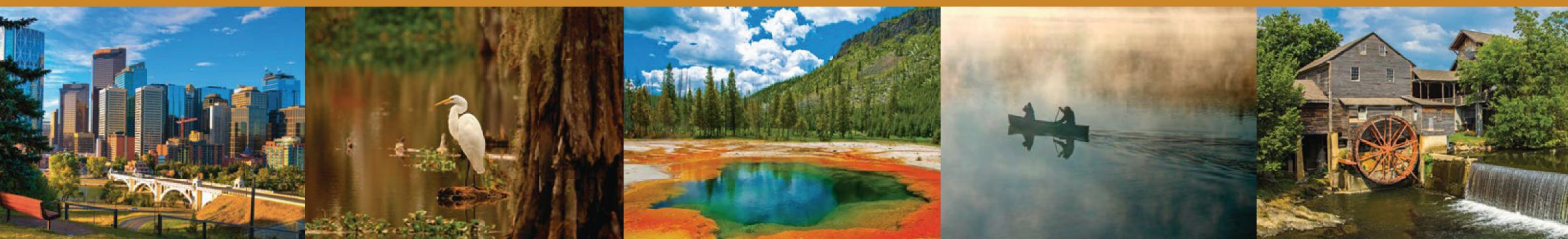

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—MAHATMA GANDHI

Inside

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A portrait from
Holi, the festival
of colors, in
Jaipur, India

PAGE 32



Tobogganers race down Quebec City's Glissades de la Terrasse, built in 1884.

MY CITY

High-Speed French Connection

QUEBEC CITY IS A BIT OF FRANCE BUNDLED IN CANADIAN CLOTHING By TARAS GRESKOE

A 19TH-CENTURY traveler from France once remarked of Quebec City, "It looked like St.-Malo strayed up here and was lost in the snow." Though I've settled in Montreal, an easy three-hour drive away, every time I return to Quebec City I too succumb to the illusion that I've been teleported to the narrow streets of that walled city in Brittany, bewitched by the vista of steeples, horse-drawn calèches, and four-centuries-old ramparts.

The province's self-proclaimed *capitale nationale*, Quebec City may be more bureaucratic and conservative than its cosmopolitan big sister, Montreal, but it's also more compact and picturesque. Writer H. P. Lovecraft in 1931 thrilled to the "chance glimpse of one of these silver spires at the end of an ancient uphill or downhill street."

I seek out such atmospheric streets as Rue Sous-le-Cap, a sinuous alleyway that dramatically abuts granite cliffs

topped by fortifications. After lingering in Place Royale, a square surrounded by fieldstone facades and steeply pitched roofs, I ride the funicular—in operation since 1879—to the Upper Town. Here, venerable inns line little-walked Avenue Ste. Geneviève, which also offers precipitous views of the St. Lawrence River. I make an essential pit stop at Chez Temporel, in the dogleg Rue Couillard, for a little French folk music and a bowl of café au lait.

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Fairmont Le Château Frontenac anchors Dufferin Terrace. A sidewalk café (below) evokes the Old World.

Rainy days call for a few hours in the concrete-and-limestone confines of architect Moshe Safdie's Musée de la Civilisation, wandering among artifacts of Québécois life (such as a circa 1736 long boat or a Montréal Canadiens hockey sweater). In winter, I'll stand in line for the Glissades de la Terrasse, an 820-foot-long toboggan ride that sends people careering down an icy slope at 45 miles per hour. It's located on Dufferin Terrace, a cliff-hugging boardwalk that serves as the perfect platform for watching nightly fireworks in summer. In all kinds of weather, I'll shop for Jacques Brel records, vintage Crock-pots, and night-lights shaped like the Madonna at Le Comptoir Emmaüs, a multi-story cross between a thrift store and Ali Baba's cavern.

Climbing the town's hills burns calories, so I feel no

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guilt about reserving a table at L'Initiale, Panache, the Saint-Amour, or one of the other restaurants where chefs work with continental French traditions but stock their pantries with ingredients from the local *terroir*. To see, smell, and purchase the best of these—including ice cider from the Eastern Townships,



Paillason cheese from the Île d'Orléans, and blueberry honey from Charlevoix—I browse the indoor stalls of the Marché du Vieux-Port. Sampling the micro-brewed ales, lagers, and stouts at Le Sacrilège bar requires some belt-loosening, as does ordering the churros at Le Cercle, an alternative music venue in the newly thriving St. Roch district.

I like to end the night at the Fairmont Le Château Frontenac's oak-paneled bar, sipping my cocktail of choice, a Pierre-Elliott Trudeau (an effective combination of vodka, triple sec, and Campari). Through windows topped by stained-glass ships, I gaze over the riverfront where the history of New France began.

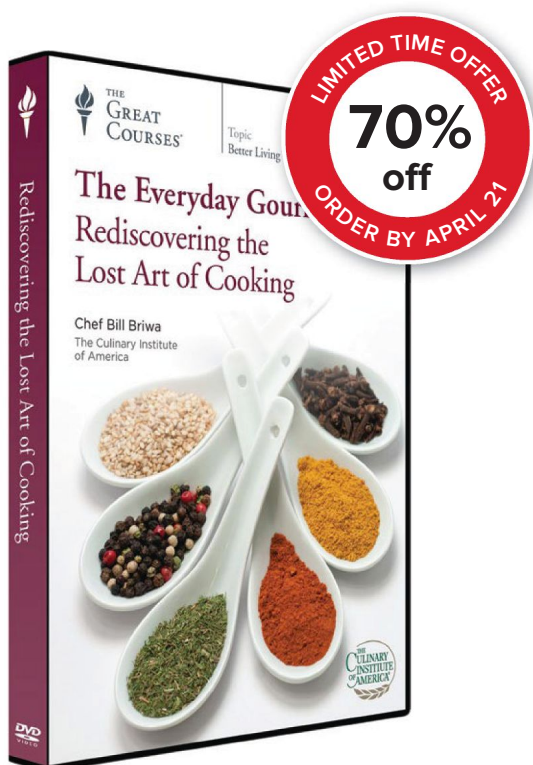
My Quebec City, after all, brings me the best of both worlds, old and new.

TARAS GRESCOE's latest book is *Straphanger: Saving Our Cities and Ourselves From the Automobile*.

ATLAS



Quebec City's ramparts are the most complete fortified city walls remaining in the Americas north of Mexico.



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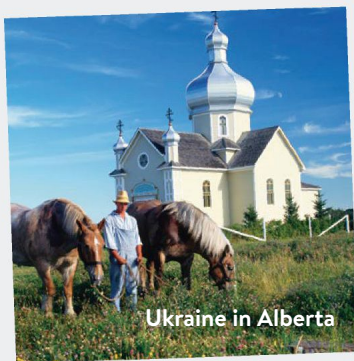
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DIGITAL NOMAD BORSCHT BELT

By ANDREW EVANS

The homemade pierogi are spot-on and the borscht is rich with dill, just like in Ukraine. But the old country is thousands of miles away; I'm on a patch of Canadian prairie in **ALBERTA**, site of the biggest Ukrainian settlement outside of eastern Europe. Specifically, I'm at the Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village, eager for a taste of the land where I once lived.

I'm normally wary of old-timey villages, where calico-clothed employees play scripted roles. But Jeffrey Larocque is good at his job; he pulls me into a lumber shop, offers me a pig-bristle brush to paint the new barn, then takes me around back so I can choose from an assortment of nails. Out in the rustling wheat field I spot Natalya Vanovska. "I came to Alberta from the Ukrainian city of Ternopil a few years ago," she says. But with her white head kerchief, she looks the part of a Ukrainian immigrant circa 1900. Playing a new homesteader, she motions to a sod home. "My husband and I built it!" she exclaims. "Others helped, and we finished the whole thing in five days."

Entering the house, I touch the poplar logs and eye a decorated wood chest from the old country. This, I decide, is the real value of village museums—they re-create scenes from the past and make sense of the present.

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LOCAL FLAVOR

Tokyo's Hot Noodle Dish

COMFORT IN A BOWL OF RAMEN SOUP By DAISUKE UTAGAWA

WHEN SOMEONE mentions ramen, you probably think of those store-bought dried noodles you bring to life with boiling water and a packet of spices. In Tokyo, ramen noodle soup is not fast food; it's an art form. Complexly flavored, the perfect bowl of ramen combines clear broth with wheat noodles, slices of roasted pork, seasoned bamboo shoots, and chopped green onions. This aromatic stock—meat, vegetable, or seafood—contains up to 40 ingredients and is simmered for hours. The noodles, from thin to wavy, are aged for up to ten days in a cool place to achieve their peak flavor and texture.

It's thought that missionaries brought ramen from China to Japan in the 17th century. But it wasn't until 1910 that Japan's first ramen shop—Rairaiken—opened in Tokyo's Asakusa district, an area of merchants and artisans.

It served simple Chinese noodle soup modified with traditional Japanese ingredients—dried fish, seaweed, and soy sauce. Today, the nation boasts more than 30 regional varieties of ramen, and nearly 4,000 places sell it in Tokyo alone. The dining routine never varies: Wait in line, order, squeeze into a seat, and slurp quickly so the next person can take your place.

In Tokyo, locals line up at **Inoue's** outdoor stand near Tsukiji Market for classic *shoyu* (soy-based ramen), its golden noodles nestled in auburn broth and topped with pork and bamboo shoots. Sixty-year-old **Raishuken**, in Asakusa, adds *wonton-men* to its menu, silky dumplings floating over traditional ramen. In a narrow alley in Jinbocho, the tiny **Sabuchan** serves *hanchan*, the ultimate ramen and fried rice combo.

ATLAS



The noodles in one package of instant ramen would stretch the length of two tennis courts.



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CHECKING IN

Going Small in the Caribbean



On the Dominican Republic's mountainous southwestern coast, a cabana at remote Casa Bonita features a private azure infinity pool overlooking a tropical forest.

CASA BONITA The Dominican Republic's antidote to airbrushed Punta Cana: the jungles of Barahona. At this family estate turned eco-resort, the chef tends her organic garden where the owner played as a kid; jewelry made of indigenous lari-mar stones sparkles in a nearby artisan village. Guests day-trip to see the flamingos of Oviedo Lagoon or stay put for zip-lining through the forest.

■ BARAHONA, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC; FROM \$211



EL SECRETO Set on Belize's largest island, Ambergris Caye, this hotel has just GPS coordinates for an address. Start your days with fresh-squeezed juice delivered to your villa—one of 13 overlooking the sea, garden, or a salt-water lake—then snorkel at Hol Chan Marine Reserve with sea turtles. Boat into town for shrimp curry at Elvi's. Back at the hotel, dance to weekly Garifuna beats under a starlit sky.

■ AMBERGRIS CAYE, BELIZE; FROM \$450



BOARDWALK HOTEL Twin sisters own and operate this boutique hotel located a short walk from Aruba's white-sand Palm Beach. Their warm, artful touch shows up throughout the 14 casitas, from walls splashed in Caribbean colors to the glass pitcher of iced tea waiting in the fridge in the full kitchen. The sisters can also direct you to favorite local restaurants such as breakfast takeout spot Mi Boca Dushi.

■ ORANJESTAD, ARUBA; FROM \$185



Low-impact weeding

TRENDING

CHINA'S GREEN LEAP FORWARD

By COSTAS CHRIST

A confession: I don't play golf, partly because I'm unable to reconcile my conservation work with a sport also known for habitat destruction, massive water consumption, and heavy use of herbicides and pesticides. And yet, until the 1950s, the sport of golf as played in the pastures of Scotland existed in harmony with nature. Can the pastime reconnect with its greener roots?

Some groups are trying: Europe's Golf Environment Organization launched a sustainability program, and Audubon International has eco-certified 988 courses. Now golf may be about to take a big step, in a surprising place. "I want to introduce **SUSTAINABLE GOLF** on a scale never done before," says Ken Chu, the chairman of China's Mission Hills—the largest golf club in the world. We are riding in a solar-powered golf cart looking at a few of the 12 courses he irrigates using only recycled gray water. I meet scientists monitoring air quality in a high-tech field station that Chu established. Shark-fin soup has been banned from resort menus, and no retailer doing business with Mission Hills is allowed to sell ivory. The verdict isn't in yet, but I'm encouraged enough to start practicing my swing.

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CASA BONITA (POOL AND ROOM), EL SECRETO (BEACH), BOARDWALK SMALL HOTEL ARUBA (PAVILION), MISSION HILLS (GOLF COURSE)



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WORLD CALENDAR

A Kaleidoscope of Spring Events



ACCORDING TO THE PRESIDENT

PREMIERE OF CAMP DAVID, ARENA STAGE, WASHINGTON, D.C., MARCH 21-MAY 4

Pulitzer Prize-winning author Lawrence Wright brings the backstory of the 1978 Camp David accords center stage. Based on events recorded in Rosalynn Carter's diary and President Jimmy Carter's archives, the play offers an inside look at some of the small moments (like an impromptu Gettysburg trip by Carter, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin) that kept the unprecedented Middle East peace talks on track.



Unleash your inner eight-year-old at the often wet—and wild—festival of colors. The color comes from bright red, pink, green, and orange *gulal* (dry powder) tossed in the air and smeared on faces. Add buckets of water and you've got a whirling, dripping sea of neon-tinted bodies.



FIRED UP IN SPAIN

LAS FALLAS DE VALENCIA, SPAIN, MARCH 15-19

Sleep isn't an option at Valencia's raucous and roaring "welcome spring" fling. The five-day frenzy of parades, parties, fireworks, and flames comes to a blazing conclusion on La Cremà ("the burning"). That's when the festival's more than 300 polystyrene and wood satirical statues (left), stuffed with explosives, are torched. The winning entry is spared and displayed.

LET'S MAKE A DEAL

AFFORDABLE ART FAIR, BRUSSELS, BELGIUM, FEBRUARY 7-10

Can't tell a Picasso from a paint by number? This is your chance to learn about contemporary art, fall in love with an original such as Caroline Poulet's resin sculpture "Royal Blue" (left), and actually afford to bring something home. Prices start at around \$65. If none of the thousands of paintings, prints, and sculptures speaks to you, create your own masterpiece at a hands-on workshop.



TUNING IN TO TEXAS

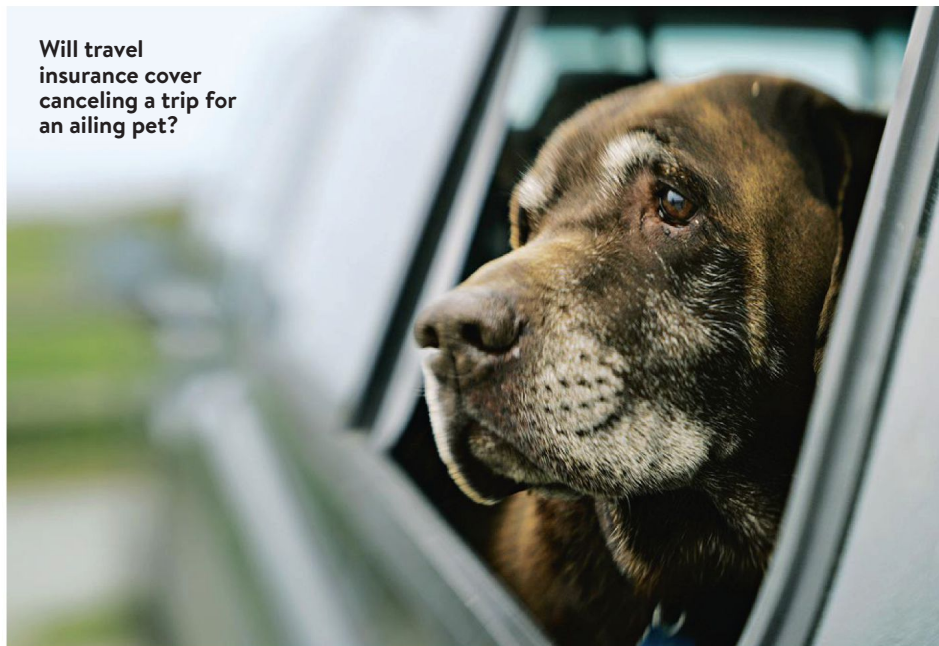
SOUTH BY SOUTHWEST, AUSTIN, MARCH 11-16

Big-name acts get the buzz (the 2013 lineup included Justin Timberlake, Prince, and the Yeah Yeah Yeahs), but the main focus at SXSW always is on what's next. With over 2,200 artists performing on more than 100 stages, it'll be easy to create a Spotify playlist filled with favorites that few of your friends have heard—yet.



ACT GRAPHICS/GETTY IMAGES (PORTRAIT); SAMEER CHAVAN (WOMEN); SEMISATCH/SHUTTERSTOCK (GUITAR); ALBERTO SALZAP IMAGES (STATUES); GALERIE VIRGINIE BARROU PLANQUART (SCULPTURE)

Will travel insurance cover canceling a trip for an ailing pet?



PROBLEM SOLVED

When Fido Is Sick as a Dog

By CHRISTOPHER ELLIOTT

Q. I just found out my dog is ill and needs surgery. I'm considering canceling my upcoming trip. Luckily I bought trip insurance.

Right? I'm sorry to hear about your pet. But I have more bad news for you. "Unless you bought a 'cancel for any reason' policy, you're not getting your money back," says John Cook, president of QuoteWright.com, an online travel insurance store. Why? Well, regular travel insurance policies provide what is called "named peril" coverage, which means they kick in only when something specifically named happens to you, like a trip interruption or the death of a spouse. But Cook hasn't ever seen a policy that includes the illness or death of a pet. The only one that would cover you is called "cancel for any reason" because, as the name implies, you can cancel your trip for any reason. Such a policy costs considerably more than a garden-variety policy. By the way, if you're thinking of buying one,

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it might already be too late. You typically have from 24 hours to two weeks after booking a trip to buy the policy.

Q. Can kids still travel on a parent's lap for free? They can, but maybe a better question is, should they? Kids under two, referred to as "lap children" in airlinespeak, can fly without a ticket when they're accompanied by a guardian. But if you're on a full flight, you won't be able to strap Junior into a car safety seat, which is the safest place for your baby on the plane. "Think about it," says Eileen Ogintz, author of the Kid's Guide series of books. "Even the coffee urns are secured on a plane. Why wouldn't you buy your baby a seat?" So why doesn't the FAA require—instead of just recommending—child safety seats? It considered doing so in 2005 but decided not to, arguing that cash-conscious parents would choose to drive instead, which is statistically a more dangerous method of travel.

STRANGE PLANET

ANTWARD SCISSORHANDS In the Amazon, foot-long lines of leafcutter ants cart sizable leaf chunks back to their nests to use as compost. **RISE UP** Bakers at Nashville's renowned Loveless Café get going every morning at 3 a.m. in order to turn out 1.5 million buttermilk biscuits annually.

TUNNEL VISION Spring driving on the Tateyama Kurobe Alpine Route—a highway that transects the northern Japanese Alps—delivers a different kind of great wall experience: Along the Yuki-no-Otani corridor, snow walls rise up to 60 feet above car level.

WATCH YOUR STEP Visitors to the 1,109-foot-tall Macau Tower can bungee jump off the skyscraper, climb ladders to the highest point, or walk around the outside of the building at 765 feet and glimpse views of Hong Kong. **ORANGE**

YOU GLAD Come spring, orange and yellow Namaqualand daisies blanket most of the South African mining town of Nababiep. **DONT BLINK** Wedged between a bar and a sandwich shop in Somerville, Massachusetts, the new, 16-inch-wide art Museum—or "micro museum"—claims to be the world's smallest. —Jenna Schnuer





Handmade ceramic angels appear to fly in Naples's Scarabattola studio. Milliner Antonio Gatto (opposite) steams one of his bespoke hats in his Florence shop.

A man with a beard and grey hair, wearing a grey sweater and a black scarf, is working in a workshop. He is using a tool to shape a piece of brown leather. In the foreground, there is a large, draped piece of brown leather. To the left, a mannequin head is visible, and various tools and materials are scattered on the workbench. The background shows a workshop environment with shelves and hanging items.

20 PLACES IN
5 CITIES WHERE
YOU CAN WITNESS
CRAFTSMANSHIP
IN ITS HIGHEST
FORM—FROM
MARIONETTES
TO MANDOLINS

Made in Italy

BY ISABELLA BREGA

THE STORY of Italian artisans is one of valuables and values,” writes Isabella Brega, author of the following article adapted from our Italian edition, *Touring*. The hallmarks of this artisanal tradition—creativity, innovation, craftsmanship—go back at least 3,000 years, to when Etruscans fashioned extraordinary works with bronze and Romans excelled in mosaics and glass. Now travelers keen to avoid mass-produced generic can embrace a creative culture that puts a premium on the handmade, the painstakingly rendered, the movingly authentic. And with that they get a sense of the real, enduring Italy. “Made in Italy means products crafted with soul,” says Franco Cologni, former chairman of Cartier International and founder of Milan’s Creative Academy. Pause to chat with a ceramicist in her workshop or a glassblower by his furnace, and you have a window into a place’s daily rhythms, its cultural history, its animating principle. Come away with an artifact custom-made for you, and that moment lives on long after you’ve resumed life back home. —*The Editors*

ISABELLA BREGA is the executive editor of our Italian partner magazine, *Touring*, and lives in Milan.



Famous for its gondolas, Venice also is home to world-class glassblowers, including Pino Signoretto, who created the piece “Abstract, Eye” (opposite).



ON THE ISLAND OF MURANO, ARTISTRY AND VISION IN GLASS

Venice

LA SERENISSIMA, an embroidery of white and pink *palazzi* suspended over water, has always produced extraordinary lace, carnival masks, and, most notably, art glass. Glass masters, or *maestri vetrai*, a title once equivalent to nobility in Venice, have included such luminaries as Angelo Barovier, Pietro Bigaglia, and Archimede Seguso. Today's maestro of Venetian glass is Pietro (Pino) Signoretto.

Working on the tiny Venetian island of Murano—where the city's wood-fired glass factories were relocated in 1291 to lessen the risk of a fire in Venice itself—Signoretto is the latest in a long line of locals who brought the art of fine Venetian glass to the world. Born near Venice in 1944, he began working at the age of ten in a chandelier factory. At 16 he was a glass master. Collaborations have included commissions for the likes of artist

Salvador Dalí. In 1978 he opened his own studio on Murano.

More than a master glassblower, Signoretto is an artist of glass, with a style very much his own. His pieces range from the whimsical—a red octopus, a colorful clown astride a milky crescent moon—to the monumental. Among his masterworks is a slender horse nine feet high that required more than a ton of blown glass.

"Glass," Signoretto says, "is just like a woman. When you think you have understood something about her, you haven't understood a thing."

Pino Signoretto, *Fondamenta Serenella 3*. Visits by appointment Monday-Friday 8 a.m.-12 p.m. and 1-4 p.m. Prices begin at \$1,350 and go beyond \$100,000. www.pinosignoretto.it

TEXTILES Arras Tessuti

A "laboratory" for fabrics, Arras is known for its hand-dyed and woven scarves, jackets, and bags for women. Campiello dei Squelini 3235 arrastessuti.wordpress.com

CARNIVAL MASKS Papiermache

A Venetian souvenir gets a redo at Papiermache, where Stefano and Eliana Manuela Gottardo create art. Calle Lunga Santa Maria Formosa www.papiermache.it

BOOKBINDING Paolo Olbi

There is no sign of high tech at this venerable bookbinder, where paper and leather become diaries, and more. San Marco 3653 <http://olbi.atspace.com>

MORE
BUYS



Teams of craftsmen built Naples's Umberto I Gallery, a 19th-century landmark. Craftsmanship has long been prized in this city known for its Nativity figures (opposite, left) and mandolins (opposite, right).



A FAMILY CREATES NATIVITY SCENES IN CERAMIC, WITH A TWIST

Naples

IN NAPLES perhaps more than anywhere else in Italy, craftsmanship is the fruit of ancient knowledge, handed down through the centuries. Today, Neapolitan artisans are bringing their work into the present, fusing tradition with innovation, and nowhere more so than at the ceramics workshop La Scarabattola, a “laboratory of art” opened in the 1990s by three brothers of the Scuotto family. Their mission: reimagining the *presepio*, the Christmas Nativity scene, long an art form in Italy.

The Scuottos, now joined by two sisters and other family members, combine the sacred with the profane, creating dreamlike settings populated with hand-sculpted, hand-painted (and sometimes sinister) ceramic priests, devils, angels, even

mermaids. A recurrent figure is modeled on 70-year-old Giacomino Dodicesimo, who has visited the Scarabattola shop daily for the past 15 years. “His childlike view of the world, the freedom of a mind that doesn’t work like others, inspires us,” says Salvatore Scuotto.

And the name Scarabattola? It refers to the display cabinets that traditionally have held Nativity scenes, a nod to the past from a forward-looking team.

La Scarabattola, Via dei Tribunali 50. Open Monday-Saturday 10:30 a.m.-2 p.m. and 3:30-7:30 p.m. Works start at \$20; the Scuottos also restore old Nativity scenes. www.lascarabattola.it

MORE BUYS

LUTES AND MANDOLINS

Liuteria Calace

Neapolitan mandolins become works of art in the hands of artisans at this workshop founded in 1825.

Vico San Domenico Maggiore 9
www.calace.it

PORCELAIN

Porcellane di Capodimonte

Flower bouquets, fairies, even Vespa scooters are rendered by Naples’s top porcelain artisans.

Corso Italia 34/1, Marano di Napoli
www.capodimonte-porcelain.com/it

TAMBOURINES

Officina della Tammorra

Tambourines of all sizes, some painted with scenes of Naples, fill this workshop that also makes castanets.

Vico S. Severino 39
www.officinadellatammorra.it



QUALITY SHOES FOR THE UNCOMMON MAN AND WOMAN

Bologna

IN THE 1930s AND '40s, Bologna was the capital of finely crafted men's shoes, led by such distinctive manufacturers as Testoni and Lemanni. Few of the 1,850 workshops from that time remain; after 1970, industrialization replaced shoe workshops with factories.

But not at Peron & Peron, a workshop that painstakingly crafts handmade shoes to order—about a thousand a year, 80 percent for male customers. Simone Peron, currently at the company's helm, took over from his father, Bruno.

"The passion for this work is in our DNA," Peron says. "We go visit a client's home and try to establish a sense of him, observing his clothing, his furnishings. We have to be both good artisans and good psychologists."

Tall wooden cases that display footwear in all shades of brown and black (with an occasional blue outlier) greet visitors

to the small shop. The shoes are studies in types of leather and hand-stitching techniques. Many of Peron's materials come from France, England, and Germany, but the technique and style are wholly Italian. Molds of each client's feet are taken and later archived so that new pairs may be ordered from anywhere in the world.

Shoes crafted by Peron & Peron are of such quality that they earned the recent admiration of other master shoe crafters: the Japanese.

"My greatest satisfaction," Peron says, "is having brought my father's name to such a distant land."

Peron & Peron, Piazza S. Francesco 14/a. Open 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. and 5:30-7:30 p.m. (closed Thursday afternoon). Handmade shoes for men start at \$1,000; for women, \$800. www.peron-e-peron.com



Fancy footwork: Handmade shoes (right) are the specialty at Peron & Peron, one of many artisanal enterprises in Bologna (above). Stained-glass techniques from the Middle Ages inform the work of Bologna's Studio Fenice (opposite).



BRUNO MORANDI/GETTY IMAGES (BOLOGNA), MASANAO OKUBO (SHOES), ZOE VINCENTI (STAINED GLASS)



STAINED GLASS

Studio Fenice

Antique stained glass is reproduced and restored using centuries-old artisanal techniques.

Via Sant'Isaia 30/c

www.studiofenicevetrate.com

WROUGHT IRON

Bottega Prata

Tables, chandeliers, and other wrought iron furnishings take artful shape in this family workshop.

Via Caldarese 1/d

www.bottegaprata.com

CERAMICS

Crete—Pièce Unique

Fanciful ceramics and jewelry depicting corals, flowers, and more reenvision nature.

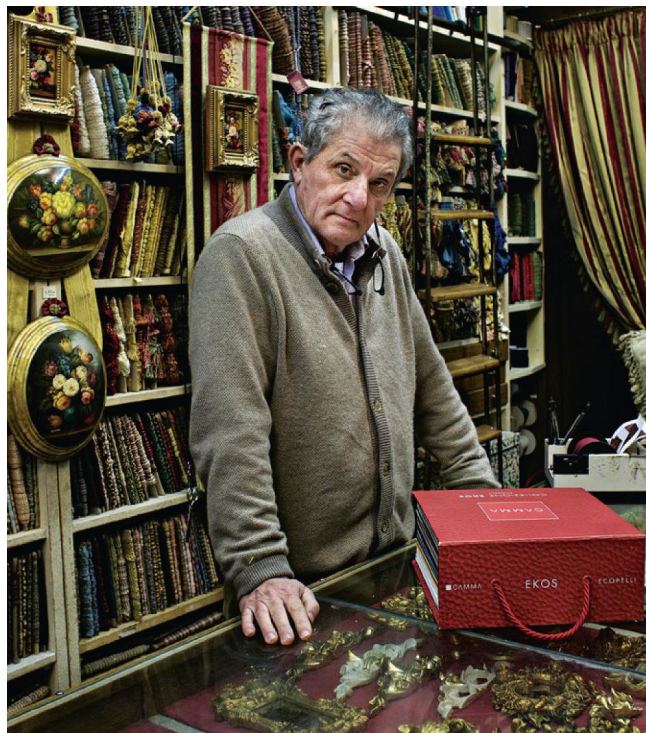
Via de' Giudei 3/b

www.cretepieceunique.it

MORE
BUYS



Designing beautiful things—even on pavements—has long inspired Florentines. Tailored hats star at Cappelli Antonio Gatto (opposite, left). Ornamental trim surrounds Vittorio Lapi at Passamaneria Valmar (opposite, right).



IT'S NOT JUST A HAT, IT'S ART FOR THE HEAD

Florence

WANDER INTO the historic neighborhood of San Frediano, just steps from the Boboli Gardens and Palazzo Pitti, and you will find a narrow shop, Cappelli Antonio Gatto. Here, some of the simplest materials—felt, straw—come alive in the hands of Gianni Gatto, a sculptor of hats.

“I discovered my masters in Florence’s little markets, where I found hats by such legendary Florentine designers as Pietro Franceschini and Gigi,” he says. The fashioning of hats has a long lineage in this city where the Renaissance blossomed; 16th-century portraits show members of the aristocratic Medici family sporting gable headdresses and red caps.

Gatto attributes his inspiration to family members.

“As a child, I would hide under sacred vestments being embroidered by my aunts. Watching their fingers dance on the cloth, I memorized how to do basting stitches.”

Gatto’s workshop, a short walk from the goldsmiths of Ponte Vecchio, is a favorite with style arbiters. Tellingly, he always keeps in mind the person he designs for.

“A hat by itself is incomplete,” he states. “It is the person who completes it, by wearing it in a certain way, giving it a soul and a personality.”

Cappelli Antonio Gatto, Piazza de’ Pitti 5. Open Monday-Saturday 10 a.m.-7 p.m. Prices start at \$165. www.antonigatto.com

ANTIQUE SILK

Antico Setificio Fiorentino

Silk fabrics—damasks, taffetas—woven on vintage looms continue a craft that first flourished in Florence in the 1300s.
Via L. Bartolini 4

www.anticosetificiofiorentino.com

LEATHER GOODS

Scuola del Cuoio

Founded to teach orphans of World War II a trade, the School of Leather specializes in bags, belts, and wallets.
Piazza Santa Croce 16

www.scuoladelcuoio.com

ORNAMENTAL TRIMMING

Passamaneria Valmar

Decorative trimmings for drapes, cushions, and other furnishings fill this one-of-a-kind shop.

Via Porta Rossa 53r

www.passamaneriaonline.it

MORE
BUYS



THESE WOODEN PUPPETS ON A STRING TELL THE TALE

Milan

ITALY'S CAPITAL for fashion and design, Milan is always in a hurry, devouring the present as it bets on the future. This city in Italy's industrial north weds imagination with precision, beauty with utility, and emotion with technique—a drive for excellence fueled by an ongoing dialogue between Milan's many creative minds and skilled craftspeople.

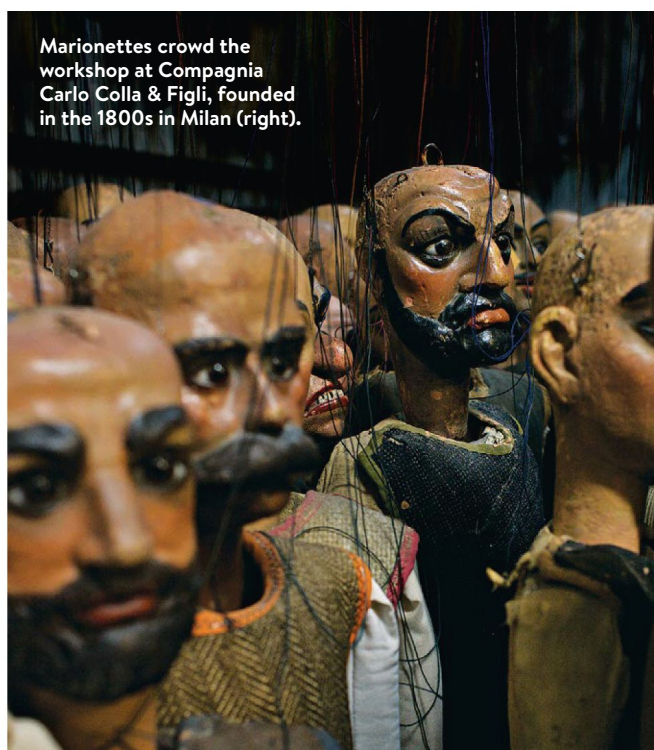
This dynamic has played out for more than a century at the Compagnia Marionettistica Carlo Colla & Figli, one of the oldest marionette companies in the world. It dates to the 1800s, when the Colla family, wealthy traders in wood and coal, created a family theater—and began fashioning marionettes and scenery. Their shows entertained Milan society. Two hundred years later, marionettes still take shape by hand here, the bodies sculpted from pinewood, then outfitted with clothing, wigs, and accessories, all by artisans such as Mariapia Lanino, who

scours local markets and collections for antique fabrics. She restores what she finds in a little room ruled by two cats. Other artisans create the scenery and lighting under the supervision of artistic director Eugenio Monti Colla.

Marionette performances produced by the Colla family—*Sleeping Beauty*, *The Pied Piper*—provide an alternative realm for children growing up with PlayStations and other video distractions.

"After so many computer buttons and keys," one child says, "here I feel free."

Compagnia Marionettistica Carlo Colla & Figli, Via Montegani 35/1. Group visits by appointment. Puppets, which generally are special-ordered, cost \$800 each and require one to four months to complete. www.marionettecolla.org



Marionettes crowd the workshop at Compagnia Carlo Colla & Figli, founded in the 1800s in Milan (right).



ZOE VINCENTI (MARIONETTES), SWEENE HUBER/GETTY IMAGES (BUILDING)

RACING BICYCLES

Le Bici del Drali

Mechanic of champions, 86-year-old Beppino Drali has been taking orders for his custom bicycles for decades. Via Agilulfo 16 <http://lebicideldrali.wordpress.com>

EMBROIDERY

Pino Grasso, Ricami Alta Moda

The art of embroidery is both honored and updated at this studio that works with many fashion houses. Via S. D'Orsenigo 25 www.pinograsso-ricami.it

WOODWORK

Pierluigi Ghianda

Everyday wares—forks, bookshelves, trays—morph into objets d'art in the workshop of Milan's "poet of wood." Via Desio 53 www.pierluigighianda.com



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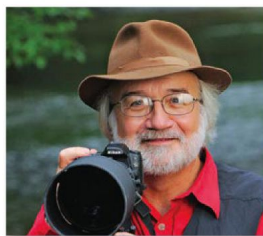
PROMOTION

STORY BEHIND THE SHOT



Gandan Monastery, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

“Sometimes the best pictures happen on the periphery of the main attraction. I’d come here to shoot the beautiful golden statuary inside this monastery, but then I saw children running through a flock of pigeons, sending the birds exploding into the air. I sensed it might happen again and moved into position. Instead of shooting with a long lens from a distance, I used my wide angle and stood right in the thick of it. That gives the shot immediacy, energy, and a feeling of participation by the viewer. You have to develop a sixth sense for when something special is about to happen and be ready. Anticipating and capturing that sense of ‘moment’ can turn ordinary situations into extraordinary images.”

National Geographic photographer
Bob Krist

Award-winning photographer Bob Krist has traveled to every continent covering assignments and leading National Geographic Expeditions. A contributor to *National Geographic Traveler*, his images have been published in books and magazines worldwide.

You can learn about photography from Bob Krist and the many other National Geographic experts. Register for a photography seminar today at nationalgeographic.com/ngtseminars.



Over the Horizon

MAJESTY AND MYSTICISM IN THE MOUNTAINS OF
CHINA'S YUNNAN PROVINCE. PLUS, A MYSTERY

BY SCOTT WALLACE

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MICHAEL YAMASHITA

on



“Might this be him?”

asks Na Niu, a temple caretaker in Tong Dui, a hamlet in China’s rugged Yunnan Province. His gnarled hands unwrap a silk scarf to reveal a blurry black-and-white photograph creased with age. The edges have a scalloped border, customary in the 1930s, about the time my wayward maternal grandfather wandered these borderlands where Yunnan’s mountains push up against Tibet.

I peer into the photo. Five faces stare back from across the decades, emissaries from a lost world: three Buddhist lamas in robes and two Westerners in suit jackets. To my dismay, neither Westerner bears much resemblance to my grandfather, Francis Kennedy Irving Baird. Somewhere here, amid the peaks and gorges of the eastern Himalaya, Baird claimed to have discovered a “lost tribe” in 1931, presaging the fictional utopia of Shangri-La that James Hilton would depict in his novel *Lost Horizon* two years later.

Little was known about Baird as I grew up—and little was said. My mother did keep a photo of him among family portraits on my parents’ bedroom wall. I’d steal into the room to study that image of my handsome, shaggy-haired grandfather posing on a mountain in what I imagined to be a very remote corner of the world. I was spellbound by the riddles the portrait held. Where was it taken? Under what circumstances? Was my grandfather a hard-bitten explorer—or a charlatan? Was it my imagination, or did he look like a man so seized by wanderlust that he felt boxed in by conventional life?

My mother wasn’t yet five when she waved goodbye to him on a Hudson

Buddhist monks of the yellow hat sect file into centuries-old Dongzhulin Monastery (right). Another monk (below), in the small village of Tong Dui, holds a photo that would startle the author. Opening pages: Windows at the Songtsam Tacheng lodge look out on terraced fields and mountain peaks.





Tibetan prayer flags frame Songzanlin Monastery, the largest Tibetan Buddhist monastery in Yunnan. "With its gilded roofs, it just dominates the landscape," says photographer Michael Yamashita.



River pier as he boarded an ocean liner bound for Asia in 1930. He promised to come back rich and famous. He did not return.

My mother never knew what became of him, not where, when, or even if, he'd died. But she'd remark, as I came of age and embarked on travels to ever more distant lands, that I'd indeed inherited her father's genes. Whether Baird did lay eyes on a lost tribe remains a question, but my own journeys eventually led me to a similarly isolated indigenous group deep in the Amazon. How to fully comprehend these odd parallels between my life and that of a man I have seen only in old photographs: our shared love of the open road, our reluctance to settle down, our respective flirtations with "lost tribes"? What was it about the Himalaya and the Tibetan Plateau that beguiled him and led him so far from home and family? To what degree has he shaped my own strivings? Hoping to find answers, any answers, I've come to this distant corner of southwest China.

I HAND THE OLD PHOTO back to Niu. Not my grandfather. Still, this hamlet, with its Buddhist shrine, has the mystical quality I imagine he was after. Perhaps the image of Baird in my parents' bedroom was taken where I stand right now, looking down on terraced fields of wheat and, beyond, the snowcapped Hengduan Mountains, which recede like waves into infinity. The scene could have inspired a passage I recall, in *Lost Horizon*: "Far away, at the very limit of distance, lay range upon range of snow-peaks, festooned with glaciers, and floating, in appearance, upon vast levels of cloud."

As I thank Niu and turn to leave, he speaks. "The foreigners' airplane crash-landed in the mountains. They eventually came here to the monastery." I stop in my tracks. My guide, Liming Jia, interrupts her translation of Niu's Chinese and stammers, "He is talking about *Lost Horizon*! They've never heard of the book here, but it has become part of their story. Incredible!"

Hugh Conway, the main character in *Lost Horizon*, survives a plane crash in the Himalaya and treks through the mountains to a secluded lamasery called Shangri-La. Enlightenment and harmony reign in this mythical realm where residents enjoy extraordinary longevity. Niu's words resonate because a kind of Shangri-La seems to have been what my grandfather was seeking before Hilton's version transfixed the world. Francis Baird claimed, in a 1931 *New York Times* dispatch, that the tribe he'd discovered likewise lived in harmony and drank from a fountain of youth, enabling them to live well past the age of 100.

MY SEARCH FOR MY GRANDFATHER had begun a few days earlier, in the community that now calls itself Shangri-La. (The name was changed from Zhongdian in 2001, after local leaders lobbied the central government for the switch.) A multi-tiered monastery rises on the outskirts, like a scaled-down replica of Lhasa's Potala Palace, and the historic district's streets are lined with refurbished wood-frame houses. Spruced-up shanties, teeming with shops bearing names such as "Thousand Joy Supermarket," now cater to an influx of tourists.

Convinced that a more authentic Shangri-La—and Baird's own trail—lay elsewhere, I'd set my sights on the little-explored northwest reaches of Yunnan Province. Not a Mandarin speaker

and unfamiliar with the area, I arranged to travel with Songtsam, a company with five cozy lodges strategically situated in out-of-the-way hamlets.

My itinerary will take me north into one of China's wildest landscapes: the Three Parallel Rivers National Park, where the Salween, Mekong, and Yangtze Rivers thunder off the Tibetan Plateau and cut through the mountains of Yunnan as they funnel into gorges twice the depth of the Grand Canyon. Most of my route lies within a 9,000-square-mile district called the Degen Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. Well into the 1930s, this once unruly region harbored ancient and isolated cultures—an ideal location for my grandfather's lost tribe.

"For Tibetans, Shangri-La is not a real place but a feeling in our hearts," says Baima Dorje, 48, the founder of Songtsam Lodges, on my first night in Yunnan. We're downing steaming bowls of

My grandfather BOARDED AN OCEAN LINER BOUND FOR ASIA IN 1930. HE PROMISED TO COME BACK RICH AND FAMOUS. HE DID NOT RETURN. WHAT ABOUT THE TIBETAN PLATEAU BEGUILED HIM SO? I NEEDED ANSWERS.

pork soup in Songtsam's flagship property, on the outskirts of today's Shangri-La. "Everyone needs a personal Shangri-La."

I felt I'd stepped into Hilton's novel the moment I entered the lodge. Pine-scented incense filled the air. Upstairs, floating candles blazed in water-filled urns. Liming Jia, thin, with almond eyes, had handed me a cup of ginger tea. "It helps adjust to the altitude." Now Songtsam's executive manager, she's an experienced guide. "We're almost at 10,000 feet here."

I recalled how *Lost Horizon* protagonist Conway marveled at the mix of Western luxury and Eastern attention to detail that greeted his arrival at the refuge: "So far, the appointments of Shangri-La had been all that he could have wished."

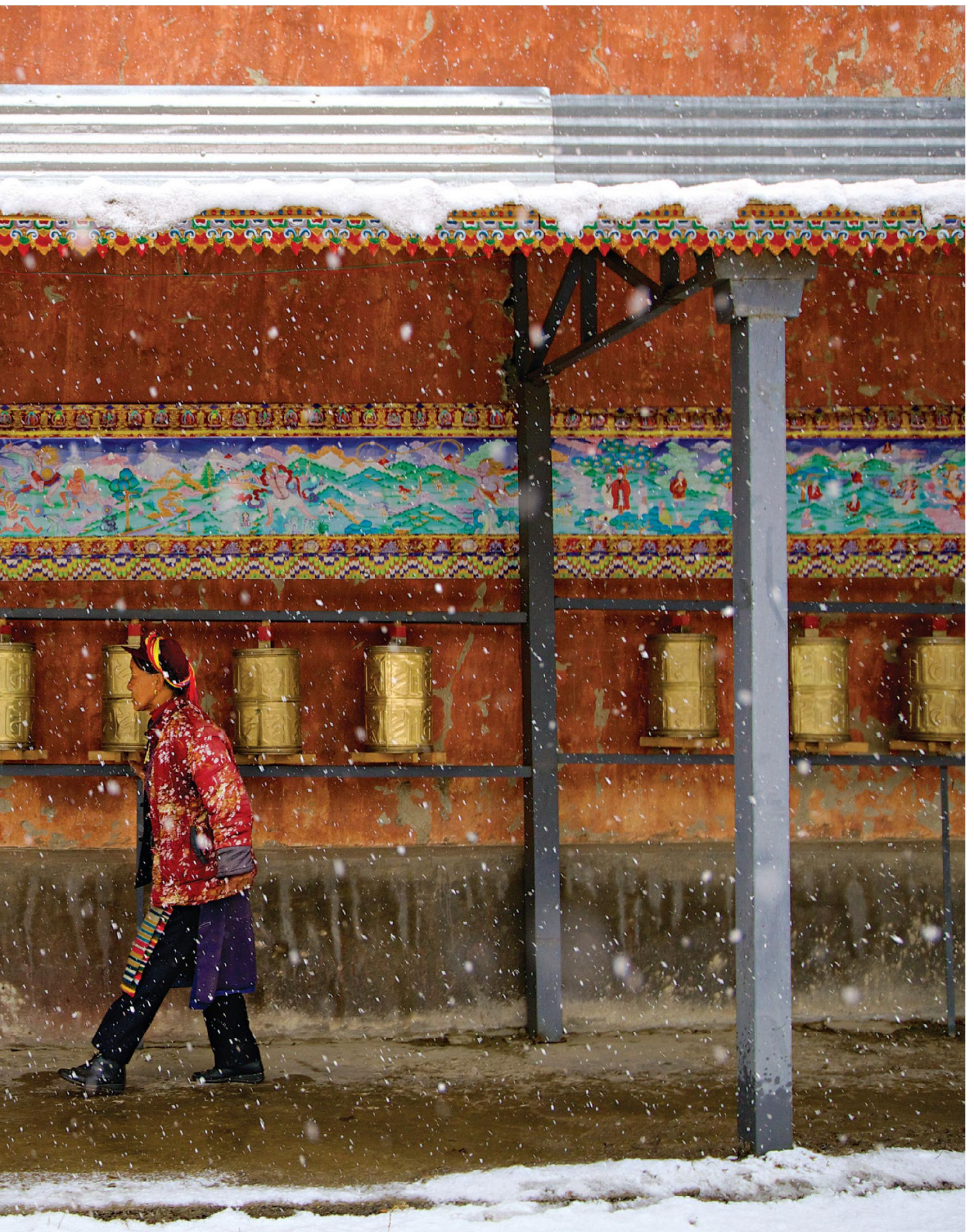
Eager to experience the traditions that drew my grandfather to this far-flung land, I jump at an offer the next morning from Tupton, a Songtsam guide, to visit his parents' home.

"Just call me 'Top Ten,'" he shouts, laughing, as we bounce out of town in the hotel's Land Rover. Woodsmoke drifts in the frigid December air around shingled rooftops glistening with frost. We round a Buddhist shrine rising like a giant chess piece in the middle of a traffic circle, and sail out across fields studded with new, boxy homes; a surge of wealth seems to be flowing into Yunnan these days. But life remains a challenge to many here, as evidenced by old women stooped under loads of hay, and beat-up tractors hauling carts packed with grunting pigs.

We pull up outside a mud-walled compound where colorful prayer flags snap in the breeze. Top Ten's parents huddle next to a cast-iron woodstove in a spacious upstairs room. The walls are brightly painted in Buddhist motifs, including a dharma wheel circling the yin-yang symbol. Top Ten's father, Nanjie, rises to greet us. His mother, Bancong, feeds logs into the fire; with her high cheekbones and blue head wrap, she looks as if she just walked in off the Asian steppe. Nanjie passes me a cup



A villager walks past bronze prayer wheels lining a wall of Fei Lai Shi temple, a Buddhist shrine in Yunnan's snowy backcountry.







Old ways prevail in Yunnan mountain communities such as Yalang (above), where women still tend their barley fields by hand. Her head wrapped in a warm red scarf, Ga Pong Chu Jui (opposite) enjoys a laugh behind hands attesting to a lifetime of manual labor.

of thick yak butter tea. Baird apparently enjoyed similar scenes of tranquillity. He wrote in *Sipa Khorlo: The Tibetan Wheel of Life*, a book published years later, “I believe there are thousands of people in the Western world who would willingly give all their worldly possessions for a few days of the peace and happiness experienced by these care-free Himalayan tribes.”

It wasn’t so tranquil here during the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s. “We had to destroy religious symbols,” Bancong remembers, “and keep portraits of Lenin, Marx, and Chairman Mao on the wall.” Now we bask in the warmth of friendship beneath the eight auspicious symbols of the Buddha, just as surely as my grandfather did in Tibetan homes like this 80 years ago. With the upheaval of Mao’s time receding into memory, a sense of well-being has returned. “We want for nothing,” Bancong says. As I take my leave, Nanjie wraps a white *kata*, or ceremonial scarf, around my neck. “For good luck,” Top Ten explains. “It’s our way to wish you a good life.”

THE GOOD LIFE seems to be what Francis Kennedy Irving Baird had in mind as he ventured into the Himalaya and the Orient. But it wasn’t a life of material rewards, and certainly not one

dictated by a sense of duty to family. “He forsook the study of medicine for the pursuit of knowledge and adventure in hitherto unexplored and inaccessible regions,” reads Baird’s biography in the introduction to *Sipa Khorlo*, which he co-authored with travel companion Jill Cossley-Batt, an explorer in her own right who remained a shadowy figure in our family lore.

My pursuit of knowledge has taken me to the village of Tong Dui, where Jia has someone she wants me to meet.

“This is where a master makes black pottery,” she tells me. “It’s unique to this region.” She leads me up log steps and into a dark room, where potter Sun Nou Qiling is removing a pair of freshly fired dove-shaped pitchers from glowing embers.

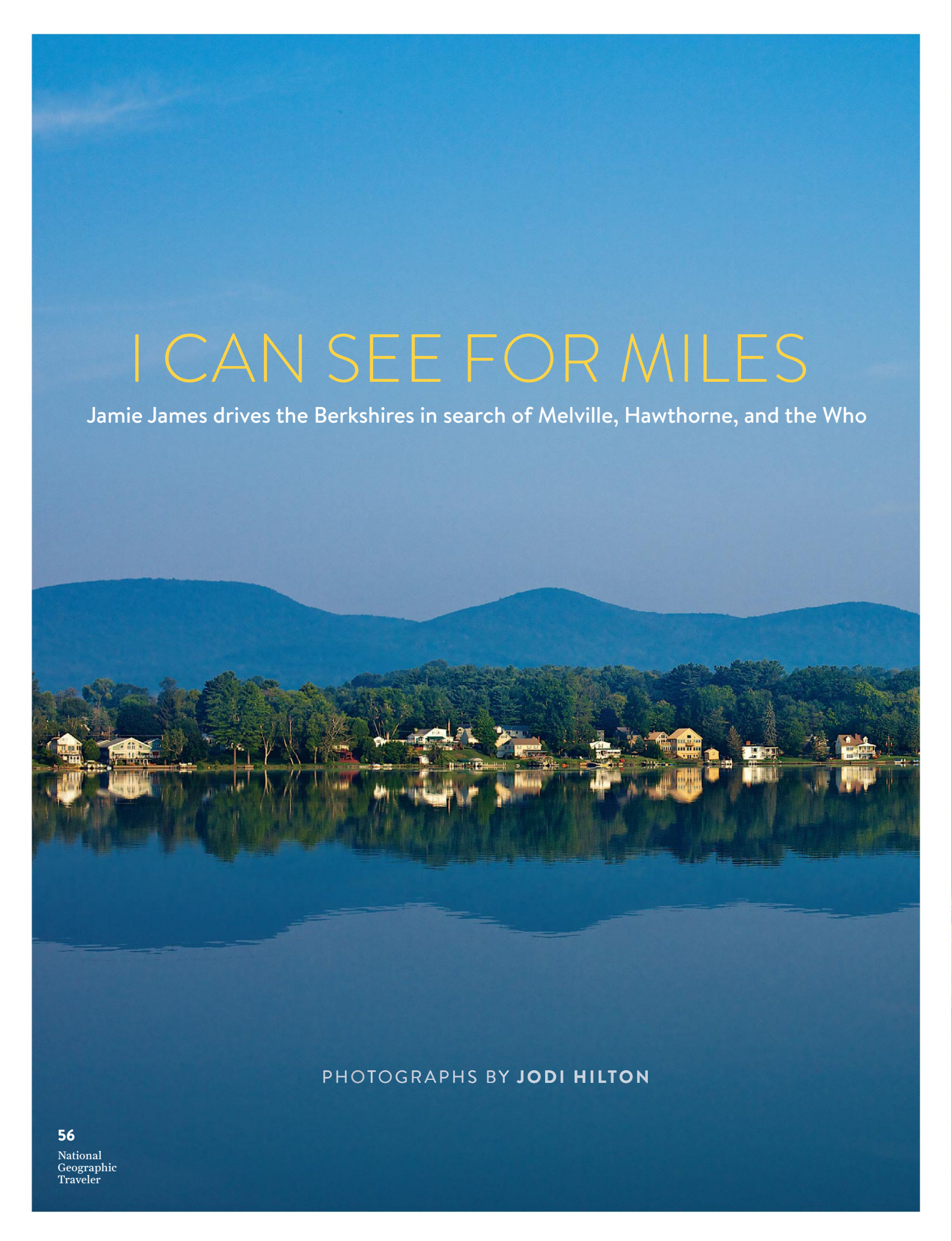
“They are for serving barley wine,” says Qiling, 64, a slight, balding man of stooped posture. He kneads a lump of clay and forms one of his works of art, then demonstrates how he turns it black by burying it in wood ash.

“My family has been doing this for five generations.” This means his forebears were plying the trade when my grandfather traveled these parts. Might he have stopped in here—and left with a souvenir? Who knows; my mother inherited nothing. Determined to pass down something more tangible to my own children and grandchildren, I ask Qiling to wrap up the two pitchers. He does so with evident pleasure, then envelops my outstretched hand in both of his and says, “Come see us again.”

Continued on page 71

**READ IT,
DO IT**

Discover Yunnan with National Geographic Adventures’ “Tea Horse Road and Shangri-La” trip. For more information, see page 9 or visit nationalgeographicadventures.com/china.



I CAN SEE FOR MILES

Jamie James drives the Berkshires in search of Melville, Hawthorne, and the Who

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JODI HILTON



Mass appeal:
Along Route 7 in
Massachusetts, rural
Lenox glows at dawn.
Pittsfield's Pontoosuc
Lake (opposite) reflects
the rolling Berkshire
mountains, part of the
Taconic Range.

MY ROOMMATE JONATHAN PROMISES THAT TONIGHT WE WILL SEE HISTORY BEING MADE: THE WHO IS PERFORMING TOMMY,

our favorite band's genre-bending rock opera, at Tanglewood, just off Route 7 in the woodlands of western Massachusetts. It's a hot day, this July 7, 1970. ¶ Jonathan and I have been here since midmorning to stake out a spot on the lawn, the cool place to be, just behind the covered shed at this Berkshires landmark where the Boston Symphony Orchestra makes its summer home. Frisbees are flying in the breeze, and so is the shoulder-length hair of the mostly male fans. As the golden haze of midsummer deepens to a violet twilight, the Who finally takes the stage. The crowd jumps to its feet and cheers. Pete Townshend leaps around like a mad cricket, Roger Daltrey tosses his microphone high into the air, and when the overture to *Tommy* begins, I can feel Jonathan's prediction coming true.

FORTY-SOME YEARS LATER, that night endures—if only in HD and hyperbole by aging fans like me. I'm driving north through Berkshire County, returning as a guest lecturer to Williams College, my alma mater, just shy of the Vermont state line. It's New Year's Day, two days after a deep snowfall, and the broad-shouldered, smoothly curving highway is nearly empty of traffic. But the rearview mirror of my mind is all swirling stage lights and marijuana smoke, twinkling fireflies and thundering bass lines.

I follow Route 7 along the Housatonic River, as the road wraps around hills cloaked in evergreen forest. The river is frozen in wide, white sheets, punctuated by intense rapids where the rocks poke through. On my right, steep cliffs of dark purple granite hover overhead, dripping icicles thick as a man's leg. The morning light picks out tiny rainbows in the ice and intense golden gleams from veins of quartzite. Even in the austerity of winter, retracing this trail of youth brings fading memories into vivid focus.

Following my meditative ramble through wilderness, it's almost a shock to find civilization when I roll into the town of Great Barrington. In my college days, the only place to stop here was Alice's restaurant, made famous by Arlo Guthrie's folksy musical monologue of the same name. Alice has moved on and her restaurant is long gone, so I pull over at the Home Sweet Home Doughnut Shoppe. The name is ye olde hokey, but at least it fits the place, which occupies the ground floor of a two-story frame house, white with red shutters. The coffee is fragrant and strong; the classic glazed doughnut about perfect.

I pay my bill and chat with the pop of this mom-and-pop business. A Connecticut native, John Scalias moved here in 2009 with his wife, Debbie, after their children flew the

nest. "Business is booming around Northampton, but it feels too urban," he explains. "We liked the vibe in Great Barrington, so we opened shop here." The Scalias' doughnut spot may be new, but it's typical of the Berkshires that I remember. You see few national chains and franchises; here most businesses have names like Tom's Toys, Steve's Auto Repair, the Mountain View Motel.

I'M ON THE ROAD AGAIN, recharged by sugar and the primeval chords of "My Generation" on the Who mix I downloaded for the drive. I'm making some progress in my attempt to feel like a kid. I slide around a curve in the road and come abreast of a regional middle school. I know just where I am, and pull off the road to admire the Devil's Pulpit.

My mind slips back to the day after college graduation: barreling down Route 7 to meet some friends from Simon's Rock, the "early college" where first-year students enroll as early as 16. Nathan, Mimi, and I planned to picnic on nearby Devil's Pulpit, a rock pillar that looms over the Monument Mountain nature preserve on the northern outskirts of Great Barrington. When we got to the park entrance, gray clouds lowered ominously. I pointed to the sky, saying, "Looks like rain."

"No problem," Nathan replied, shrugging. Nothing was ever a problem for Nathan. "We can always find a cave or crag to sit under."

We chose the steeper path, where the trail follows a cut in the rock, thickly wooded with evergreens and a few stands of oak and maple that were then in full leaf, a brighter green. The forest shaded a tapestry of wildflowers, accented by flashy pink lady's slippers. Where the trails converge, Inscription Rock, a flat boulder with an elegantly carved epigraph, claims the mountain for "the people of Berkshire as a place of free enjoyment for all time," dated October 19, 1899.

The rough-hewn granite steps of the trail wind just below Squaw Peak, the highest point, to the Devil's Pulpit, a dizzying column with a view almost to Vermont, nearly 40 miles away. The prospect takes in a few church steeples and smokestacks

Finding the sweet spot: From the Devil's Pulpit (top left) on Monument Mountain, a hiker surveys the wilds of western Massachusetts. Nostalgia is big in the Berkshires, from old-fashioned candy sticks in Stockbridge (top right) to antique cars (bottom right) and apple cider doughnuts (bottom left) in Great Barrington.





along the curling ribbon of Route 7, but mostly it's an undulating sea of forest. Just as Mimi had opened the picnic basket, a light rain began to fall. No problem: As Nathan foresaw, an overhang nearby proved just wide enough for a cozy picnic.

Now, as I gaze up at the Devil's Pulpit from the roadside, a lecture from an English course I took at Williams struggles up to the surface: When Nathaniel Hawthorne was living in Lenox and Herman Melville in Pittsfield, the two men met for the first time on a climb up Monument Mountain with some friends. Caught in a thunderstorm, they sat together under a rock—perhaps the very place I picnicked with Mimi and Nathan. The two writers brainstormed for hours, the beginning of a close friendship. Some scholars say this encounter sparked Melville's novel about a man's demented quest of a great white whale: *Moby Dick*, the first and still a leading contender for the title of the Great American Novel. He dedicated the book to Hawthorne.

Four decades later, judging by what I've seen on the ground, the view from the Devil's Pulpit must look much the same. There's a good reason why Berkshire County has kept its wilderness: Fully one-third of the land is permanently protected from development.

EVEN IF IT'S YOUR FIRST VISIT, Main Street in Stockbridge may seem familiar. Norman Rockwell called the town his home for 25 years and described it as “the best of America, the best of New England.” In 1967 he completed a sweeping portrait of the south side of the street at Christmastime. The eight-foot-long oil painting holds court at the Norman Rockwell Museum, just off Route 7, and showcases Stockbridge's collection of intact architecture—the redbrick town offices under a Dutch stepped roof (now a candle shop), the neoclassical bank, and the baronial Red Lion Inn, fronted by a porch lined with tall rocking chairs.

I stop for lunch at the Red Lion. I'm not surprised to see that most of the menu hasn't changed in decades, and the long dining room, embellished with lace curtains and shelves full of fanciful antique teapots, looks as if it hasn't changed in a century. I order the famous native turkey dinner with all the trimmings. Served on Blue Willow china, the thick slices of turkey are moist, the dressing nutty—all smothered in a comforting blanket of gravy.

Tanglewood, just down the road, west of Lenox, is closed for the winter, but I make a quick detour to have a look. I park on the road and hike across the parking lot, deep in snow. The lawn slumbers under a flawless mantle of powder, gleaming bluish in the shade. Slanting afternoon sunbeams highlight a row of icicles running along the eaves of the entrance gate, like a blindingly bright pipe organ. Next summer's program is posted: Tanglewood long ago banished hard rock in favor of classical and jazz. As I return to Route 7, I defiantly test the limits of my car speakers with my Who mix.

The risk in taking a sentimental

journey is that the places you want to revisit may have vanished, but when I get to Pittsfield I have the opposite experience. I think back to the crisp fall day I drove in search of Melville's house, where he wrote *Moby Dick*. I had found 780 Holmes Road easily enough, an 18th-century white farmhouse with a bronze eagle over the door, like a thousand houses in the Berkshires. A sign in the driveway had warned: PRIVATE.

MAIN STREET IN STOCKBRIDGE MAY SEEM FAMILIAR. IN 1967 NORMAN ROCKWELL COMPLETED A SWEEPING PORTRAIT OF THE SOUTH SIDE OF THE STREET AT CHRISTMASTIME.

These days Arrowhead, Melville's home, is open to the public as a museum, and I've been eager to make a return pilgrimage. I discover the house has been painted mustard yellow, the original color, and filled with sturdy wood furniture of the type that was here when Melville owned the place. A mammoth chimney, velvety black with centuries of soot, dominates the ground floor. Melville wrote a story about this chimney. The volunteer tour guide, an enthusiastic local woman, explains that after Melville moved out, his brother Allan carved a few lines from the story in the chimney. Tracing the engraving in the blackened stone, she reads the first sentence aloud, “I and my chimney are settling together.” She grins. “Isn't that neat?”

Upstairs, through the window of his study, I take in the postcard view of snow-frosted Mount Greylock, the highest point in Massachusetts. The guide says that this view inspired the tale of the great white whale. I consider mentioning the alternative creation story, that the novel's genesis was Melville's literary summit with Hawthorne at the Devil's Pulpit, but decide against it. I don't want to offend the guide.

By the time I hit Williamstown I'm deep into the strangely beautiful fable of *Tommy*. As “Pinball Wizard” booms, the lawn of my alma mater extends before me. The federal-style wedding cake of the president's house tops the hill in the mid-distance; beyond it rise the gray Gothic spires of the college chapel. I won't say that I feel 18 again, exactly, but cruising in on Route 7 sure feels like a homecoming.

A few days later, wandering the galleries of the small, internationally renowned Clark Art Institute, I pause in front of one of my favorite pictures, Winslow Homer's oil painting of two mountain guides. I can almost feel the wind on my face. Immersed in fall foliage, one man is grizzled, the other fresh-faced—a dichotomy not lost on me as I contemplate my own coming-of-age in this place, stuck in time in so many ways.

For the past 15 years, **JAMIE JAMES** has lived in Bali, which he wrote about in the June/July 2013 issue. He is also the author of several books, including *The Snake Charmer*. Photographer **JODI HILTON** splits her time between Boston and Istanbul. This is her first feature for *Traveler*.

Live cultures:
“Stockbridge Main Street at Christmas” (top) takes center stage at the Norman Rockwell Museum, not far from this scene. Picnicking during performances is an art form at Tanglewood Music Center (bottom), named for the book Nathaniel Hawthorne wrote while staying in a Berkshires cottage.

THE INSIDER

The Berkshires, Massachusetts

THE COLONIAL TOWNS along Route 7 in western Massachusetts are quintessential New England any time of year. Summer festivals bring out cultural crowds, while late September swarms with leaf-peepers.

WHERE TO EAT

Here, it's all about the Berkshire farmer—not to mention the cheese-monger, butcher, distiller, and brewer. Chefs source locally at **Gramercy Bistro**, at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art in North Adams, and at

Williamstown spots. **Mezze Bistro + Bar** draws loyal fans to its bucolic farm setting for small plates with a Moroccan-Greek pedigree, and **Hops & Vines** has oysters, craft beer, and a fireplace—a welcome sight after a day on the road.

WHERE TO STAY

In continuous operation since the 18th century, Stockbridge's **Red Lion Inn** remains a classic, with rocking chairs on the porch and doilies and canopy beds in the rooms. On the other end of the Stockbridge spectrum, the lakefront **Kripalu Center for Yoga & Health** hosts retreats with a labyrinth, yoga and dance classes, and tai chi on the lawn. The **Williamstown Bed & Breakfast** is a five-minute walk from Williams campus happenings. Outside Lenox, the ultraluxe **Blantyre** dates to 1901 and was modeled after a Scottish castle.

CALENDAR

The summer home of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, **Tanglewood** in Lenox provides a cultured sound track for picnics on the grass and seats in the historic shed. **Jacob's Pillow** in Becket is the nation's

leading summer dance festival (and its longest running). Film and TV talent come to do the standards at the Tony Award-winning **Williamstown Theatre Festival** each summer. Dozens of their productions have transferred to Broadway. In late October, the **Williamstown Film Festival** convenes the likes of Sigourney Weaver and Joanne Woodward. The **Barrington Stage Company's Musical Theatre Lab** in Pittsfield premieres works from May to August. *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* started at this theater.

WHAT TO READ

In *Ethan Frome* (1911), Edith Wharton makes the winter landscape of Berkshire County a major character in a page-turner about adultery, set during a blizzard in a fictional town inspired by

Lenox. Liam Neeson starred in the 1993 film. While Henry David Thoreau was at Walden Pond, he wrote about a solo hike up Mount Greylock in a passage of *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (1849). The account inspires an annual summer climb for Thoreau fans.

ATLAS



Every U.S. dollar is printed on cotton-based paper from Crane and Company, a Berkshires producer that's been the sole supplier to the Treasury since 1879.

North America's earliest recorded reference to baseball appeared in a Pittsfield bylaw dated 1791.

Oscar winner Gwyneth Paltrow made her acting debut at the Williamstown Theatre Festival in 1981.

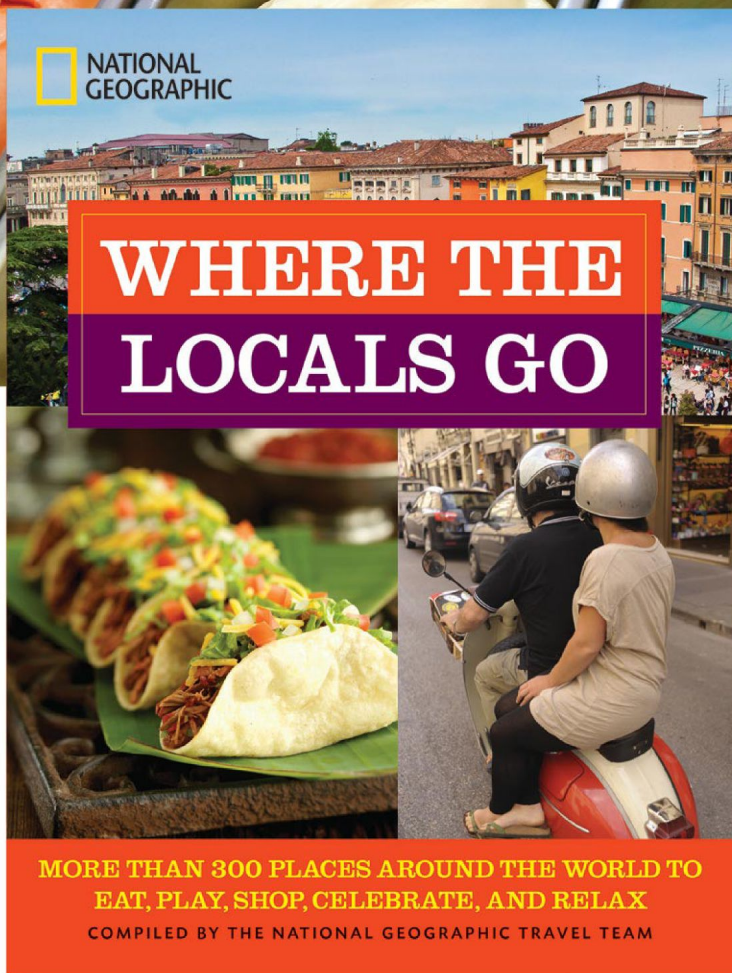


LITERARY TOUR

BERKSHIRE BARDS

Quiet beauty here has incubated centuries of literature. Edith Wharton (left) wrote *The House of Mirth* (1905) at the Mount, her Lenox estate popular for its Italian formal garden and ghost tours. In Cummington, poet William Cullen Bryant's home- stead offers guided tours. Nathaniel Hawthorne's "little red house," where he wrote *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851), has been rebuilt behind Tanglewood. In Pittsfield, Herman Melville penned *Moby Dick* (1851) from his study at Arrowhead, which looks out onto Mount Greylock.

When in Rome . . .

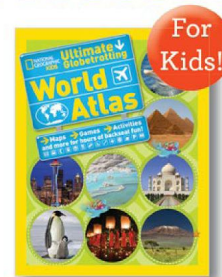
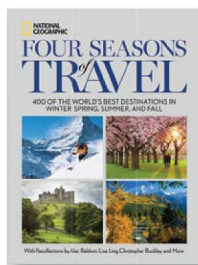
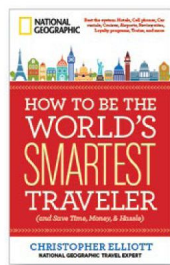


If you travel like a local, you know savvy Brazilians prefer colonial Olinda over big, brash Rio hands down for an exuberant carnival experience. And native New Orleanians don't go to Bourbon Street, because the best place to listen to jazz and eat a po'boy in the Big Easy is Frenchman Street. Oh, and Angelenos don't shop on Rodeo Drive—they know Third Street between South Edinburg Avenue and La Cienega Boulevard is ground zero for L.A.-chic.

Find these and hundreds of other insider tips in *Where the Locals Go* and discover how to truly enjoy the world's favorite destinations.

And always, when in Rome, do as the Romans do.

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Accordion, viola, double
bass, violin: Members
of the Szászcsávás Band
head for a gig in the
Transylvanian village
of Ceuaș.

ROMA RHAPSODY



FOLLOWING THE KINGS OF
GYPSY MUSIC STRAIGHT INTO
THE HEART OF ROMANIA

BY PANCRAS DIJK

PHOTOGRAPHS BY BOGDAN CROITORU



Music making is as natural as breathing in Zece Prăjini, where a villager plays accordion in a bedroom. Visiting music fans can stay at a Roma-style guesthouse (opposite).

UNDER A STARLESS NIGHT SKY, THE MUSICIANS ARE GATHERING. FOR THE PAST SIX HOURS, THEY'VE BEEN PLAYING AT A PARTY IN

this small Gypsy, or Roma, village in the Moldavia region of Romania. But now, with solemn expressions on their sweaty faces, the 12 men have one more, important task to fulfill: to pay tribute to a 60-year-old fellow villager who earlier in the day took his last breath.

At exactly midnight, they enter the large front yard of a traditionally built dwelling of clay. They take their positions between some bent fruit trees and a wood fire heating a big kettle of cabbage. Tubas on the right, baritone horns in the middle, trumpets and clarinet on the left. Firmly filling their lungs with air, the men known as Fanfare Ciocărlia—having performed in more than 60 countries on five continents and enjoying a worldwide reputation for being the fastest and wildest Gypsy brass band around—begin playing a farewell march to their neighbor.

Searching for the roots of Roma music in a nation on Europe's edge has led me to this melancholy yard. Fifteen

years ago, I followed my Romanian girlfriend to this country and since then have shared many joys as well as a loss or two, so I'm somewhat familiar with Romanian mourning habits: I spill some drops of the homemade wine, which the relatives of the deceased had passed around, then raise my glass in acknowledgment of their grief. But my spontaneous libation isn't repeated by anyone else, I notice. I feel as if I've entered a parallel life, its sound track playing right in front of me. It becomes obvious to me: This is a different Romania, not the same country I have visited more than a dozen times in the past decade. Welcome to the world of the Roma.

THE VILLAGE OF ZECE PRĂJINI is one of a kind—and not just because of the many excellent musicians among its 400-some inhabitants. It is said to be the only Romanian village with a 100 percent Roma population; the church, built a decade ago



entirely with donations by members of Fanfare Ciocărlia, claims to be the only Roma Eastern Orthodox church in the world. Next to the church, Costel Cantea has a bar. He generously serves a sweet *vișină de casa* to visitors he happens to like. As he fills my glass a second time with this high-proof, house-made sour cherry liquor, he notices me looking for an ashtray. “Pancreas,” Costel says, mispronouncing my name, “please, just throw it on the floor. Dirt makes a bar look lively. You can’t have fun in a clean bar. Or what do you think, Pancreas?”

Romania has the largest population of Roma in eastern Europe, estimated unofficially by the European Commission at 1.85 million. Here, as elsewhere in Europe and the U.S., Roma are often viewed unfavorably. While enjoying a beer in a second village bar, I catch a TV news report about 400 Roma who are about to be deported from Italy to Romania.

The reality of this Roma village contrasts markedly with what the news anchors report about the miserable conditions in which the Roma live in Italy, France, and other western European countries. In Zece Prăjini, earlier in the day, a woman picking apples from a tree had offered me a handful of them when I passed her yard. “Have some more,” she said, after I remarked that they tasted very sweet and juicy.

Zece Prăjini, meaning “ten acres,” has been breathing music for over a century—quite literally, because unlike any other Roma community, the inhabitants play brass instruments, with the odd woodwind or percussion instrument thrown in. Despite its small population, Zece Prăjini counts four brass bands: Ciocărlia, Ciucar, Shavale, and Zece Prăjini—with all shades of rivalry between them.

“Look at my hands,” says Lazăr Rădulescu, a trumpet player and senior member of Fanfare Ciocărlia. “They’re way too big and coarse to play something as delicate as a violin. We play brass.” That’s been the tradition since the 1860s, when slavery was abolished and each Roma family here was awarded ten acres by a landlord.

Rădulescu, in his 60s, remembers his childhood as being full of brass music, and he’s confident that the future will be no different. “Lots of our kids play instruments, too. They’re eager, but also they see what prosperity it has brought us.” The youngest generation of *lăutari*, or musicians, differs from the older ones in one main aspect: They are taught at music schools in the nearby city of Roman, and they are able to read music. So how did you learn it? I asked several older musicians. Their answers were always the same: “With the ears, from my father and grandfather.”

ISAY GOODBYE to Moldavia and follow a route that crosses the Carpathian Mountains at Cheile Bicazului, a spectacular, 3.7-mile stretch of road through a startlingly narrow pass, flanked with walls of rock stretching 1,148 feet up to the sky. Halfway through, in a spot where the canyon offers a bit more air and is suddenly wide enough for more than just a two-lane road, souvenir sellers display their wares, some of which are worth the money: fine fabrics, wooden toys, decorated pottery. Dozens of plastic Dracula tchotchkes make it clear I’ve reached the region of Transylvania.

But I am going to meet God, not a vampire. With a worn-out violin held loosely in one of his hands, he arrives right between



Slapping and twisting his legs in lightning fast moves, a Roma dancer performs for a tour group in a Ceuș yard.

the welcoming glasses of strong *horincă*, plum brandy, and the chunks of meat with salad and potatoes that compose my dinner in the village of Ceuș, or Szászcsávás, as they call it in Hungarian, the dominant language in parts of Transylvania. The mustachioed, stern-looking Dumnezeu (God) has brought three of his disciples. Together they make up the Szászcsávás Band, a string ensemble that plays old-style Hungarian and Romanian Gypsy music: a frantic rhythm with up to four melody lines, weaving complex lyrical patterns. “At age four I held my first violin,” says Dumnezeu, the nickname that



star violin player Ștefan Iambor goes by. He formed his first ensemble at 13.

“Your violin looks pretty old and maltreated,” I tell him, but he tells me it is only two years old. “It was custom-made for me in Bucharest,” he says. Due to the intense way he plays, his instruments don’t grow old with him. “Music is an essential element of our identity in this region. Far away from Western influences, we were able to preserve the traditional, Hungarian-style Roma music. Even in Hungary you won’t find anyone playing this kind of music anymore.”

I FOLLOW THE MUSIC to the other side of the Prahova Valley, through the Carpathian crescent separating Transylvania and the historic region of Walachia. In the far south, near the Bulgarian border, I reach the village of Clejani. The landscape has flattened out here, with cornfields reaching as far as the eye can see. Clejani is the birthplace of the band that gave me

ON THE IPAD

Watch a YouTube video of Roma music group Țaraf de Haidouks performing live in Clejani, Romania.

Some things you just can't Google.

my first taste of Roma music: Țaraf de Haidouks. More than ten years ago, I experienced the group performing live in a packed venue in Amsterdam. They were impressive on stage as well as off; after the show ended, they played on and didn't hesitate to ask the audience for some extra money. I was sold, for good.

The musicians making up the Țaraf de Haidouks ensemble happen to return home from a concert in Switzerland during my first day in the village. One by one, they get out of various taxis, dressed in shiny black suits, designer sunglasses hiding their eyes, some with black hats atop their shiny black hair. They seem the odd ones out, here in this dusty village. In fact, they hold this place together. For many in Clejani, the group's international fame is their main source of pride.

The current star of Țaraf de Haidouks is Caliu, a violin player with talents one could describe as either divine or diabolic. In the evening some of the best Clejani musicians show off their skills in a long concert on the porch of a house that is still under construction, like so many in this rapidly developing country.

The music the Roma play in this village, epitomizing a very Romanian musical style, is characterized by the use of the accordion and the cimbalom, a hammer dulcimer, played here at incredible speeds.

During a break, I sit down next to the ensemble's singer, the nationally famous Vasile Dinu. While he wipes the sweat

from his forehead with a white handkerchief, he has to endure perhaps the stupidest question ever posed to him: "What are your lyrics about?" I ask. The old man frowns and says, "*Despre dragoste*—About love." What else could one possibly sing about, his tone implies.

As we're chatting, some Roma women serve *sarmale*, spiced minced meat wrapped in cabbage. "We've been rolling them for two days," one of the ladies playfully complains.

Clejani is close to the capital city of Bucharest, where, on the next evening, I decide to visit Club Fabrica, a trendy underground bar in the heart of the old city. While DJ Vasile (real name: Lucian Stan) pumps his 21st-century dance beats into the cramped club, my thoughts go back to the master violinists in Clejani and Ceuș, and the brass players in Zece Prăjini. Those last guys definitely generate more beats per minute than this DJ can pull off, I realize.

Suddenly, the sound of a violin comes out of nowhere. To his mix of pumping bass and trancelike electronica, DJ Vasile has added a sample of what seems to be a sweet Roma melody. Two parallel universes sharing the same heartbeat collide into one.

Adapted from a story that originally appeared in the Dutch edition of *Traveler*, where **PANCRAS DIJK** is a senior writer. Photographer **BOGDAN CROITORU** is based in Bucharest.

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Yunnan, China

Continued from page 55

If Shangri-La really did exist in physical space, it wouldn't take much imagination to place it in the Meili mountains. At the start of the fifth day of my journey, I look out on five colossal snow-covered peaks—part of the Meili Snow Mountain Range—in the dim dawn light from the Songtsam Meili lodge. Jia is warming her hands by a coal brazier. She points to the highest peak. "Kawagebo, a sacred mountain to Tibetan Buddhists."

Its grandeur makes me think of Karakal, the icy peak in Hilton's *Lost Horizon*: "It was an almost perfect cone of snow... so radiant, so serenely poised, that he wondered for a moment if it were real at all."

The Meili range marks the northernmost point of my trip; on the far side of Kawagebo lies Tibet, where grandfather Baird also roamed. Fortified with a breakfast of barley pancakes and wild honey, Jia and I take leave of the friendly lodge staff and head south toward the Upper Mekong Valley, which will serve as our corridor back to the urban centers. Our road takes us past an overlook punctuated with 13 gleaming stupas, one for each of the Meili peaks. It will be our last unobstructed view of the sawtooth mountains rising white and brilliant. We duck into a kiosk for incense and pine boughs to placate Kawagebo. As I slide my offerings into a ceremonial oven set beside the stupas, I say a prayer for my grandfather, hoping he found the inner peace he was looking for in this remote mountain realm.

Two days later I bid farewell to Jia and continue on to the cobblestoned town of Lijiang, once a celebrated stop on the caravan route linking the tea plantations of southern Yunnan with the cities of Lhasa and Kathmandu to the west. Its ancient Naxi architecture and stone bridges crossing a lattice of canals have made Lijiang's Old Town a World Heritage site and an ever more popular destination for Chinese tourists. But I've come to pay homage to the eccentric Austrian-American botanist and explorer Joseph Rock, a recluse who lived for nearly 30 years in the tiny village of Yuhu, about a half hour's drive out of town.

I find his home, now a museum, tucked away in a warren of narrow streets lined with mud-brick walls in the shadow of snow-capped Jade Dragon Snow Mountain. It's a stone and wood structure with a shingled roof. During the 1920s and '30s, Rock sallied forth from here to explore Yunnan's remarkable diversity of landscapes—from warm subtropical valleys to chilled subarctic heights—in search of exotic plants and local cultures he documented for *National Geographic* magazine. James Hilton, by his own admission, found inspiration for *Lost Horizon* in Rock's writing and images.

Did those reports also act as a trumpet call for my grandfather? I think of a letter that Baird had written home from these mountains, telling of his recent purchase of pistols and hinting at the dangers that lay ahead. The lost tribe he sought may have inhabited an idyllic community of harmony and longevity; navigating the broken landscape was another matter.

On our final afternoon together, Jia had quipped that she was

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Yak butter tea, a staple of Tibetan diets, finds takers in the village of Gezinong.

taking me to a “lost tribes” village, the sort of place grandfather Baird would have gotten wind of. Our vehicle followed a track carved along the wall of a gorge, the roar of the creek below us drowning out the gear-grinding ascent. The track had leveled off at a ten-foot-high wooden cylinder spinning inside a scarlet pagoda. “It’s a prayer wheel,” Jia had said. “The water makes it spin.” A narrow ditch was funneling rushing water beneath the

wheel, where small paddles kept the auspicious symbols of the Buddha in constant motion.

I stood by that relic from the deep past, when our forebears still felt awe at such simple things as the changing of the seasons or the blooming of a flower. A time almost, but not quite, lost. A soft bell pinged with each revolution of the wheel and blended with the laughter of children from a schoolhouse up the hill. The sun was beginning to set, throwing long shadows across the glen.

I cast back to my very first night in Yunnan, when I sat with Baima by the roaring fire.

“I believe that lost tribes could still exist in these places,” he had told me.

As I turned toward our vehicle, it occurred to me that he may have been right, that a lost tribe could be just beyond the ridge, in the next valley over. And maybe, just maybe, my grandfather is there with them, having discovered in this

mysterious land the harmony and the unity in which he so desperately wanted to believe.

SCOTT WALLACE is the author of *The Unconquered: In Search of the Amazon's Last Uncontacted Tribes*. Veteran photographer **MICHAEL YAMASHITA's** books include *The Great Wall: From Beginning to End* and *Zheng He*.

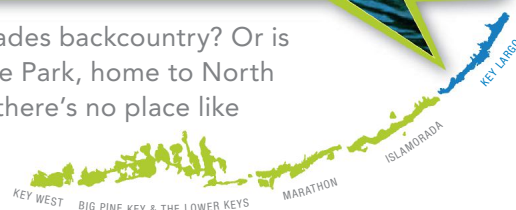
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THE INSIDER

Yunnan, China

LAND OF PEAKS, valleys, and monasteries, Yunnan is home to the largest number of ethnic groups in China. The gateway towns of **Shangri-La** and **Lijiang** showcase area traditions and cultures, but many interesting sites lie in the countryside.

WHEN TO GO

Yunnan is known for its localized climates. Shangri-La is best visited from late spring through summer, when days warm into the 80s F. Kunming, to the south, has been dubbed “spring city” for its mild climate year-round. Regional temperatures can dip, however, so bring warm clothing.

WHERE TO SLEEP

Songsam Lodges operates five cozy properties in Yunnan in a variety of settings,

including Shangri-La, that reflect the region’s diversity. Travelers may stay at one lodge or choose a circuit package that visits multiple lodges with guides for an easy introduction to this fairly remote and rugged part of China.

Laomadian Lodge, in the town of Shaxi, offers rooms in a gracefully converted inn and stable on the ancient Tea Horse Caravan Road. Its **Karma Cafe** dishes up regional fare—and brownies. Another



interesting option in Shaxi is the evocative **Olde Theatre Inn**, an eco lodge that occupies a restored courtyard building complex.

Zen Garden Hotel, in the historic town of Lijiang, mixes antique furniture with modern conveniences and will arrange tours to local Naxi sights.

WHAT TO SEE

Shangri-La, formerly Zhongdian, is both a county and a town; attractions include Yunnan’s largest Tibetan Buddhist lamasery, **Songzanlin Monastery**, known for its remarkable frescoes and its resemblance to Tibet’s multi-tiered Potala Palace.

The venerable trading city of **Shaxi**, with its peaked wood roofs, ranks as one of the most authentic

caravan towns along the storied tea route; its Friday market deals in everything from livestock to tea.

Visitors flock to **Lijiang** to see its old town, a World Heritage site. Also a highlight: performances by the local Naxi Orchestra, which plays nightly.

Near the scenic mountain village of Shiyi lies **Dongzhulin Monastery**, home to monks of the yellow hat sect—and artfully restored prayer halls. This part of Yunnan is famed for its **black pottery**, which is baked directly in a pit fire. Master potter Sun Nou Qiling crafts his black pitchers, pots, and more in the village of Tong Dui.

WHAT TO READ

Forgotten Kingdom, by Peter Goullart (1955),

is a memoir by a Russian-born explorer who advised Chinese industry in the 1930s and ‘40s, and gathered his insights about both Chinese and Yunnanese culture and thought in this must-read volume.

ATLAS



One of the most complete fossil deposits ever found is in Chengjiang, outside Yunnan’s capital, Kunming.

Yunnan is considered China’s mushroom capital, with some 600 mushroom species, many edible.

Women rule in segments of Naxi society, thanks to an old matriarchal tradition.

PHOTO TIP

PEAK PERFORMANCE

“A ritual in the Meili mountains is to rise early to see Kawagebo, Yunnan’s most sacred peak,” says photographer Michael Yamashita. “Usually, Kawagebo hides in a sea of clouds, so a photographer needs luck. I have visited three times and snagged shots on each trip. This is my favorite, with the first rays of sun highlighting the snowy peak and leaving the foreground and clouds in shadow.”



Kawagebo, ringed by clouds

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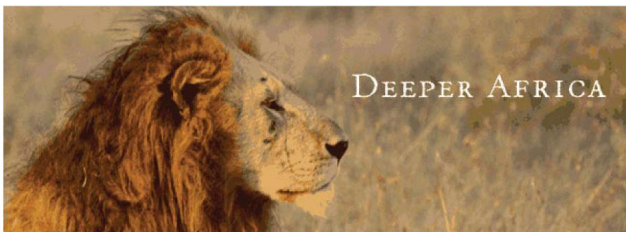


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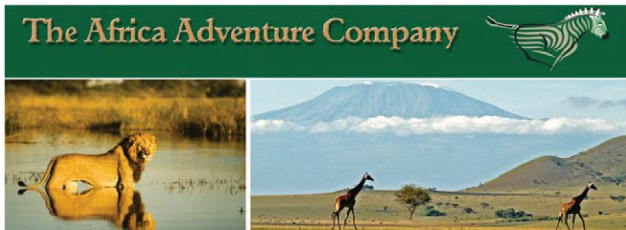
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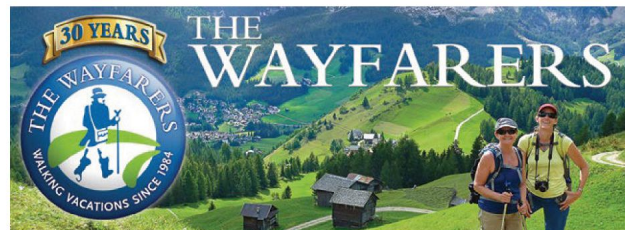
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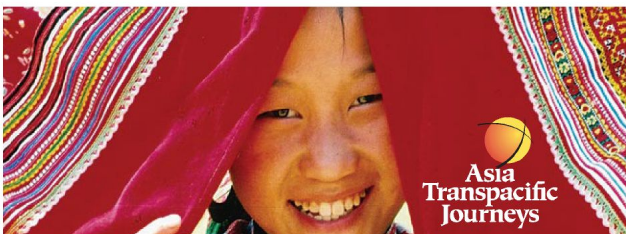
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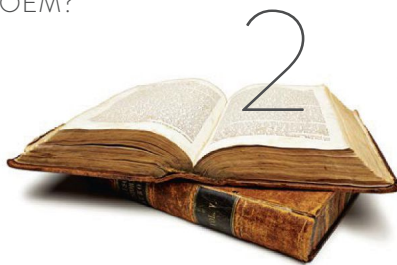
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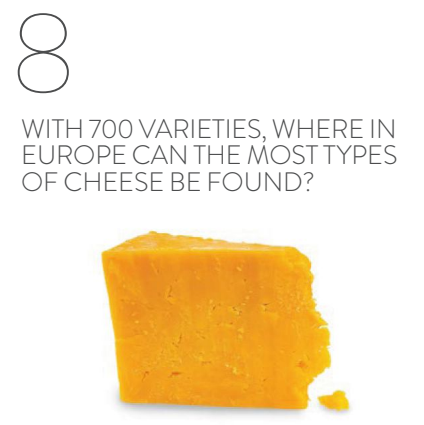
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